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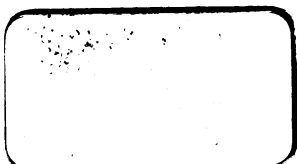
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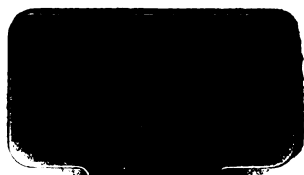


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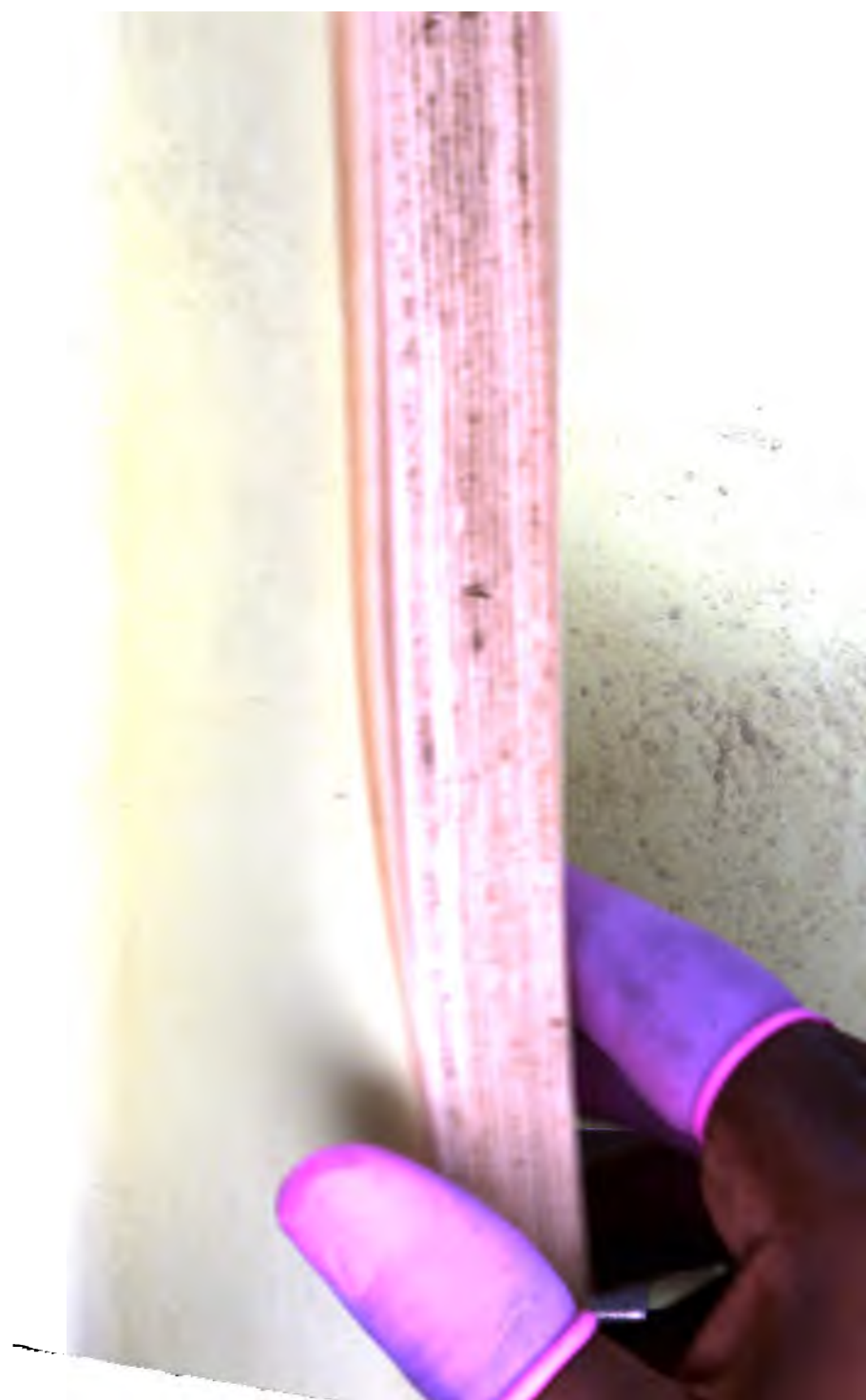
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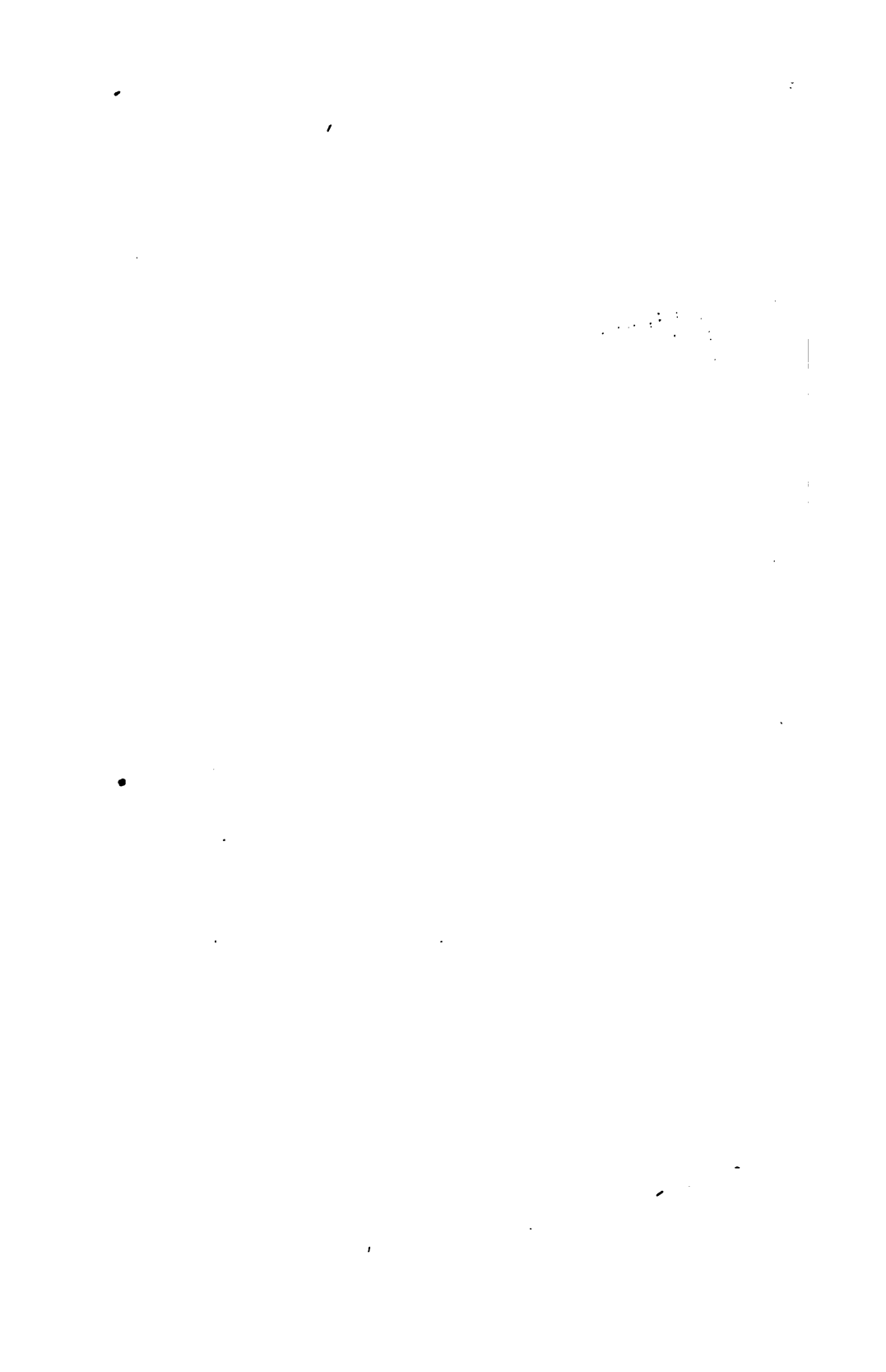
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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

A MAIDEN AUNT.

Wm. H. W.

LONDON:

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1858.

249. K. 228.

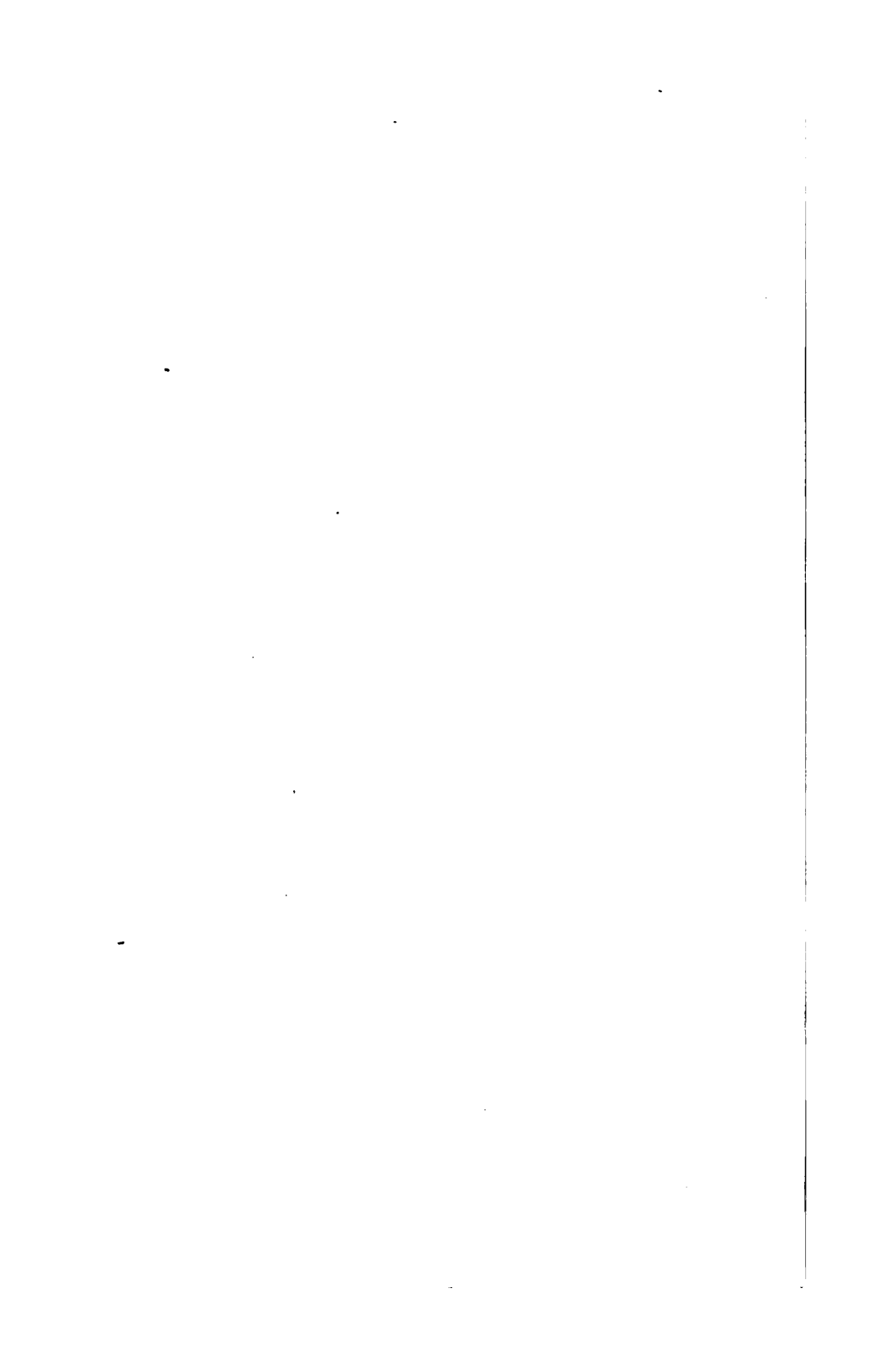


DEDICATION.

To my Sister, at whose solicitation I have at length consented to brave the criticism of the world, and place before other eyes than the loving ones of my own family the contents of my little book.

It is not without much trepidation that I do so, feeling how inadequate are my powers to the task I have attempted, and dreading the harsh condemnation I may receive; but I am comforted by the reflection, that let the world "wag as it will," my humble efforts will still serve to amuse and interest the circle gathered in my happy home.

B— B—, September, 1858.



RECOLLECTIONS
OF
A MAIDEN AUNT.

I.

Not a very interesting title, perhaps my young readers may exclaim; but who can tell that some of you may not share the same fate, so show a little pity to an old woman who sometimes likes to look back on days gone by.

This is my seventieth birthday, and as I sit by the fire, in my cheerful drawing-room, and watch my little pet great niece playing about me, and loving me, and I her, as dearly as if she were my own, I cannot help thanking God for his mercies, and feeling though I may have had great

trials, yet that He has guided me through them, and my age is very peaceful. I sometimes compare my life to a cold rainy day one frequently experiences in early spring, and which as often gives place to a brighter and more genial period.

My childhood's home was in one of the midland counties, and certainly, for its size, I have never seen a place which could compete with it in interest to me. Homeden Hall was purchased by my grandfather; it had belonged to an old Roman Catholic family, who, whilst a hope remained of reviving their fallen fortunes, would as soon have parted with their lives as the home of their ancestors.

To them wide lands had once belonged, and they had kept up an almost feudal state in the quiet district where they lived. Their names are still recorded in their country's history amongst the high and noble of the land; sometimes holding posts of dignity and power; then going into exile with the Stuarts; coming back again, re-instated in all their former wealth by the

“Merrie Monarch;” till at length, being ever loyal in weal or woe to what they deemed their rightful sovereign, a death-blow had been given to their prosperity, from which they seemed never to recover, in their determined zeal in supporting the cause of the unfortunate and interesting Charles Edward, descendant of their former kings, and the defender of their revered religion. And lands and even lives, were lost in the desperate attempt to restore him to the throne of his fathers.

Scarcely a room in the old house which had not a legend of former times; some even laid claim to having afforded shelter to the prince when he was pursued by his enemies.

They had lived abroad for many years, and while one generation had struggled with penury, devoting their younger children to the cloister to save the necessity of fortunes, and heap their all on the eldest, even before he came into possession it had been lost at the gaming-table.

So Homeden was sold to the wealthy

parvenu. The fine old red brick house, with its mullion windows, and lofty turrets, surrounded with terraced gardens, was situated in the midst of a park which had once been finely wooded, but those beautiful trees had long been cut down to help to pay the debts of their old masters. Yet there was much still to admire; the principal sitting-rooms were panelled with black oak; the long galleries, full of pictures of knights and ladies of the old Homeden family, still gazed at us from the walls; and then the kitchen, with a gallery for the thrifty housewife to walk round, and see there was no needless expense; and the mottos, which it would have been well if the heads of the house had learnt by heart—"Waste not, want not, &c."—which, though it was written on their walls seemed to have been strangely forgotten in their conduct.

Their successors were very different. My father was a rough country squire, delighting in all field sports, and his bottle of port after dinner, to make up for the

fatigues of the day; proud of the affluence which he, or rather his father, had accumulated. He had been their only child, and in their extreme love they had toiled unremittingly, and almost deprived themselves of every comfort to amass together riches which should raise him to the position he now held; but, alas! had forgotten to instil into his mind those precepts which, if he had possessed them, might have made his riches a blessing to him; and content with gratifying his every wish, had never taught him to consider the feelings of others.

His marriage with my dear mother had raised him to some consideration in the county, and beyond that he had no ambition. My brother Hugh, Rose, and myself, composed their family. Hugh was one year my sister's senior, and I was two years younger still. Rose and I were inseparable; for many years we had no governess but our mother, and when our few hours of study were over, we were allowed to run wild where we pleased. The curate

of the parish was Hugh's tutor, and after his lessons were completed, we were his companions in many a ride and fishing excursion. Rose was my father's darling; and, indeed, who did not love her? I can see her now, with her beautiful light curls, soft brown eyes, and a countenance that showed at once the sweet, affectionate disposition she possessed. Hugh was like Rose in appearance, but with blue eyes; and I was very different looking from either, being more like a Spanish than an English child, and generally went by the name of little "Blackie," instead of my real one of Isabella.

Ah, happy time, never estimated at its proper worth till long past! with few wishes that could not be gratified, no anxieties, no fears for the future.

Whilst an occasional ride, or birthday party to the few children our neighbourhood could muster, was the summit of our happiness, our father might have been called indulgent; and never from our mother did we learn why her cheek was at times so pale,

and her kind eyes filled with tears, nor the cause of our being frequently hurried to the nursery, when but half the usual time of our sojourn down stairs (so dear to every child) had expired. But as Hugh grew older, being very observant of things passing about him, he began to listen and draw his own conclusions from the whispered remarks of servants. To me these suspicions were soon communicated, and we were both confirmed in their truth, by the remembrance of occasional bursts of ungovernable passion from which we had suffered at any childish misdemeanour which interfered with my father's comfort, mattering little how slight the actual fault might be.

It was strange how differently this fresh insight into the family secrets affected us children. With Rose, when we hinted to her our fancies, she indignantly and decidedly refused to give them any credence, for her pure heart, so overflowing with love to each and all around her, blinded her to the faults of all her friends; and it was a pretty sight to see her trying to convince

us of the wrong we were doing, and pleading every act of kindness she could remember of my father's, till the colour mounted to her cheeks, the pretty lip began to quiver with emotion, and she had made converts of Hugh and me, for a time, until something else occurred to make us change our minds again; and I began to dread the sight of one I so much feared, and even to shrink from caresses that I felt might so soon be changed to harsh and angry reproof.

With Hugh this feeling went even further, for his was a fearless disposition, that a word of kindness might have controlled and led by any one who loved him; but imperious commands, loud and unreasonable reproaches, accompanied as they even were by blows, were all alike scorned, and too often set at nought by the high-spirited but affectionate boy; and as he became aware of the selfishness that seemed to dictate every action towards him, it was hard for Rose and myself—nay, sometimes even for our mother—to make him see it was

his duty to submit; and every year added to the difficulty, for the constant exercise of some of his worst passions was gradually destroying the natural gentleness and docility of his disposition, and instead of implicitly obeying an order, it was first canvassed as to its advisability in a way sadly injurious to one so young.

Though many, many years have passed, since the incidents took place of which I am now writing, a thrill of pain shoots to my heart as I think of that divided household. It scarcely seems a daughter's office to bring up the faults of one who has so long mingled with the dust, and I am half inclined to relinquish the task, but am induced to resume it in the hope that the experience of a lifetime may give a lesson to some, without their having to learn it as bitterly as I had.

Reader, of whichever sex you may be, if married, or still dwelling under the paternal roof, take an old woman's word for it, forbearance, and attention to the wishes of others, is the way to make life really

happy. Sacrifices you may have to make, and many of them, and even have to bear their not being properly estimated by those for whom you have made them, but you will find it best in the end. And, above all, married people who live at discord with each other, think not you are only making yourselves unhappy, for if you have children, as surely as they grow up, you will most likely find out, too late, that you have unconsciously been preparing the road to greater wretchedness for them, than even you have ever experienced; for are not the sins of the fathers visited on the children? So, dear friends, be not angry with an old maid's counsel, but let her be cheered by the hope she has not suffered in vain, and that there are some who are the better for her story.

Time glided on, leaving few traces behind, or any incidents worth recording, till the trio, which had so long shared every thought together, were separated, and Hugh was placed with a tutor, only a few miles from home; and we had a gover-

ness, a prim but good woman, who was much shocked at the uncultivated state in which she found us. She tried her best to make us like other girls, and in a great measure succeeded, except when Hugh and his friend and fellow-pupil, Walter Annesley, came home for a few days, and then lessons were neglected, and we were nearly as wild as ever, delighted in having our old companion restored to us; and Walter was always welcomed as another brother. But Hugh's visits were like angels', "few and far between;" and it was well they were so, as my father and he could never agree.

I often think that my poor mother most unintentionally increased the ill-feeling. She had married when very young, and had found her dreams of happiness sadly different from reality; and, disappointed in not finding a companion in her husband, all the warmest feelings of her nature centred in her son. It was beautiful to see their affection for each other, but when Hugh offended his father, whether he deserved reproof or not, if my mother could screen

his anger from him she would. This my father having sometimes discovered, his jealousy was extreme, and his severity more than the high-spirited boy would bear, and quarrels too deep to be forgotten by either were the result.

And then it was that we first began to hear of the mania which was to cause so much grief to fall on my brother's future life. Unfortunately for him, Walter Annesley was preparing for the army, and in the natural boyish enthusiasm about the profession which had been his choice, it was the almost constant subject of their conversations, till the greatest object of poor Hugh's ambition was to be a soldier too. And this was increased by the constant scrapes he was getting into at home, in consequence of the little progress he made in the classical education, which my father made a point of his having; and when every month the reports of his advancement came, and each seemed to be less cheering than the last, my father's anger was terrible, and it was increased by his fixed belief that

the cause of his failure did not arise, as Hugh constantly assured us it did—and I really believe to have been the case—from an utter distaste and incapacity for such studies; and he was constantly quoting how Hugh excelled in everything he really set his heart in, forgetting how different the exercise of the eyes and limbs are, to that of the head and mind.

Truly Hugh was made for a soldier; even from a child it had been his ruling passion, and now that it was fanned into a flame he thought of little else than how he was to obtain the summit of his wishes; and we were sometimes amused to find him, if we suddenly came into the room, pacing about, earnestly consulting a book of military tactics. His short visits home were frequently embittered by his repining at the disagreeable studies he was so soon to resume, and utter loathing to the statesman's career, for which they were to fit him.

Almost children as we then were, Rose and I had many grave consultations on the

subject together, when Hugh had returned to what he termed his bondage. We had been so long his only companions, that we both probably felt more than a usual sister's interest in his troubles; and though each, and especially Rose, felt that he ought to make greater struggles to interest himself and improve in his (to him) objectionable studies, as my father was so anxious about it, yet no one can deny that his fate seemed a hard one, and we, his sisters, felt it was so, and pitied him extremely, sympathizing as we did in his predilection for the profession of arms.

We used to long for some one in whom we might confide, and whose advice might reconcile Hugh to his lot, for we had often tried in vain, and were now continually receiving letters from him full of lamentations, and plans by which he hoped to induce his father to change his views, and we used to feel so guilty and miserable at being obliged to keep these letters secret, for though my mother's affection for all her children was undoubted and sincere,

yet, from some cause or other, Rose and I (though I am sure it did not arise from want of love or respect to her) were still too much under constraint in her presence, and so unused to tell her our little griefs, to think of confiding this.

I often wondered, in later life, how it came about, so kind a mother as she always was, and have never arrived at a satisfactory solution to the mystery. Sometimes I have laid it to the custom of those times; at others, to the life she led having given her a manner of habitual constraint, which had stopped our getting over a feeling of awe, mixed with our love, until later, when I have feared there might have been some latent feeling of jealousy lurking unconsciously in our hearts, at the decided preference she had always shown for Hugh, forgetting how that was, for he was older than we were, and thus more capable of understanding her sorrows; and it would have been strange indeed, if the adoring love which the boy had always shown to-

wards his gentle mother, had not been repaid by as deep a feeling.

So we kept our secret; and this went on for some time, until by some mischance some of Hugh's letters fell into my father's hands, and he was very angry, and for the future our correspondence was put under strict surveillance.

We had scarcely been forgiven for the part we had taken in this misdemeanor, when Hugh came home for the Midsummer holidays, and for a few days we were very happy; but it did not last for long, for murmurs soon broke forth again as bad as ever, till one day my father and poor Hugh had been discussing the old subject, and the latter making an earnest request to be allowed to be a soldier, instead of entering a profession for which he had neither taste nor talents, and had been peremptorily and angrily refused. And so they parted, for Hugh was going home with Walter; and instead of as formerly being soothed and comforted by my mother's reiterated promises of interfering in his behalf, he thanked

her, exacted a promise that she would never again bring down his father's anger on her for him, tore himself away from us, and started on his journey. Poor mother! how you watched his retreating form, answered every wave of his hand, and wept when the distance hid him from your sight. Poor mother, had you known!

II.

SURELY before great afflictions we sometimes have a foreknowledge of evil, sent, perhaps, by a merciful Providence to strengthen and prepare us for them; certainly my mother was tormented by constant and apparently needless fears for her son, the most tangible being that Hugh would enlist as a private soldier, having no other way of entering the army. And there had been a degree of affection in his manner of bidding us farewell, almost

amounting to solemnity, which seemed to augur some fixed purpose having entered into his mind. What that was, we had no opportunity of judging.

The war was then at its height in the Peninsular, and my mother knew that recruiting parties were marching about every country town; and she redoubled her entreaties to my father, to be allowed to write to him, tell him he was forgiven, and that he should not be compelled to adopt a profession he disliked. This irritated my father so much that we were ordered not to mention Hugh again, till he should have submitted to his decision.

In a few days a cheerful letter from Hugh, telling his mother of his warm welcome at the "Elms," and how he was enjoying his visit, put her into corresponding spirits; for when could he be gay and she sad, or he unhappy and she not also?

Rose was now considered old enough to leave the schoolroom; she had had permission to do so some time before, but we were so happy with our governess, and in

each other's society, that she shrank from entering into the gay world unaccompanied as she would be by me, her constant companion; for though Rose was two years my senior, she was so very youthful in her appearance and ideas, that I generally passed for the eldest with strangers, and Rose always seemed to trust to my opinion, and, as it were, retire behind me, as though I really were so.

She had almost made up her mind to wait until I could accompany her, but these resolutions were all set aside by a request from her aunt, my mother's sister, who lived in an adjacent county, that she might be allowed to go to her for her first balls. Perhaps if she had had a long time to think of her solitary journey, my shy little sister might have repented having settled to go; but she had but short notice, and the few days before her departure flew rapidly away in the girlish delight she felt at the pretty dresses prepared for her gaieties, and thinking of those amusements themselves.

At last we bid her good-by, with as many kisses and promises of writing as if we were losing her for a term of years instead of days; but it was our first separation, and it was a great disappointment, that, now this long-reckoned-on event was so soon to take place, we were not to be together.

My greatest pleasure during her absence was her constant letters, which were filled with glowing descriptions of her gaieties. She had hitherto led so secluded a life, that everything was new to her, and was enjoyed with all her heart. Instead of, as we had feared, being overwhelmed with the novelty of the scenes before her, the enlivening ball-room music seemed to inspire her with such delight that all her fears were forgotten, and she enjoyed herself as one never does, except in early youth.

Scarcely ever did my father see or hear from any of his friends, but he was congratulated on possessing such a beautiful daughter, and certainly with reason; for added to the almost statue-like purity of

her face and form, there was a degree of freshness in her appearance and manner, which a town-bred beauty might not hope to imitate, proceeding as it did from her sweet innocent heart; she was the natural lady in every thought and action, in consequence not of any studied manner, but from the thorough unselfishness which might be marked in everything she did.

The time fixed for her return had passed, and she still lingered. Our aunt, Mrs. Widdrington, was a widow without children, and she delighted in young companions in whom she could interest herself, and took a pleasure in adding to their happiness.

The cloud which had been threatening us, now broke. One morning my father received a letter from Hugh, to say, that, having given up the hope of being allowed by him to follow the bent of his inclinations, he had accepted the offer of Sir Charles Annesley to give him a cadetship, and in one month was to sail for India. This conduct of Sir C. Annesley's seems to require some explanation.

Whenever my father talked of his son's prospects, and he was questioned by his friends as to the cause of his so little consulting Hugh's tastes in the selection of his future profession, he tried to palliate the selfishness that really actuated his conduct by talking as if he did not wish to put him into the army, as a soldier scarcely ever rises high enough in his military career to enable him to be sufficiently well off without much private fortune; and this had impressed Sir Charles with the idea that though my father might have a large property, he was, perhaps, but scantily supplied with ready money; and Hugh, I fear, was too glad to obtain the cadetship to enlighten him as to his error.

"Twenty years," wrote Hugh, "must elapse before my return; it is a long time to look forward to. Who can say that we shall meet again? Let us be friends then, father, before we part, perhaps for ever."

Alas! his appeal was answered by a command from my father that he might never see or hear of him again!

My mother's tears and entreaties were alike in vain to persuade him to alter this stern decree; and at last the misery and excitement she had undergone for some time was too much, and brain fever, which for many days threatened her life, ensued. She recovered slowly to health, but a sort of mental torpor seemed to have come over her, and though her reason was preserved, she never seemed to feel things as she had done, and often only partially remembered the past.

I missed dear Rose in our troubles dreadfully; she who had shared my every thought from infancy, was away when I had most need of her, and it was the more to be regretted, as she had by far the greatest influence over my father; and, perhaps, if she had been with us to join in our entreaties, he might not have persisted in banishing his son for ever. She had been written to and told of my mother's illness, by my father, though not of the extent of it, and she was coming home soon. Of Hugh she knew nothing as yet.

My mother was still very ill, and in my attendance on her the time passed quickly on, till I was shocked to find that only a few more days of poor Hugh's last month in England were left, and began to fear he would be obliged to go without one word of parting from those he loved best; and the constant dwelling on this melancholy topic sadly retarded my mother's recovery, for even if we had managed to write to him, which was next to impossible without my father's knowledge, we were quite ignorant where to direct our letter.

At last, one day I received a note from the wife of my brother's tutor, asking me to come and spend a few hours with her; we had been in the habit of frequently doing so, that no suspicion was raised by my going, and as my mother was now fit to leave, I was thankful to be able, as I felt no doubt of the reason of my being asked, and it was no surprise to me on my arrival to be welcomed by Hugh and Walter Annesley. The sad repentance which the former felt—alas, poor boy, too

late!—for his former impatience of control, required all the comforting I could give, to persuade him not to dwell hopelessly on the past, but trust to a happier future. This made it very difficult for me to have to tell him my bad tidings, but I softened our mother's illness as much as possible to poor Hugh; took charge of a little sketch of him in his cadet's uniform; cut off one bright curl for her, promising to remember countless messages, how, when he came home, they were to live together and never part again.

“And you and Rose must supply my place till then: Walter will do his best to let you hear of me, dear sister, and let me sometimes find I am not forgotten by you and darling Rose in my banishment.”

He bade adieu to his kind tutor and his wife, and then turned to Walter—

“I shall meet you at Southampton, Hugh,” he interrupted.

Then with one long kiss, many tears, and heavy aching hearts, we said a long

farewell, he mounted the coach, and was soon borne from my sight.

Walter comforted me in my sorrow, sympathized in my longing for Rose's return, and planned many schemes of letting us hear of Hugh, that by the time we had to separate, though tearful and unhappy, I was calm.

"And you will be a brother to me, Walter, now poor Hugh is gone?"

"Not a brother, Blackie, but a dear, dear friend."

And I did not feel disappointed at the difference,

III.

My next task was to give my poor mother the farewell messages of her son, and it was not without many fears that I did so, not only dreading the effect it might have on her, but also doubting if she had suffi-

cient memory of the past to keep it a secret from my father, who had given orders that no communication should be kept up with Hugh, and I well knew would cut off any intercourse he became aware of. She listened to me with attention and calmness, shed a few quiet tears when I gave her the picture and lock of hair, but never spoke, and I feared she had not understood me; but the next day when we were alone, she put her hand in mine and said—"Tell it all to me again." And many, many times had I to repeat the tale of that parting; it was the only subject that ever seemed to interest her.

Rose came home, and it was my task to break the sad news to her, and we wept together over it. Deep was her grief at not seeing dear Hugh before his departure; but we were both young and sanguine, and soon began to build castles in the air about his return, hoping that some unlooked-for circumstance might make it more speedy than was at present anticipated.

I shortly found that Rose had not come

home the child she went, and that I had a formidable rival in a certain Charles Leigh, a nephew of my aunt's late husband. Little as I then knew of such matters, I could perceive that any gaiety she mentioned as having particularly enjoyed, owed most of its attractions to the fact of its having been shared with him. The flush that mounted to her cheek at the mention of his name, and above all how she looked forward to their next meeting, made even me see that Rose was what people call in love; and if I had been older, I might have feared for my sister's peace of mind; but I had too an exalted idea of her fascinations to be at all afraid of her affection not being returned.

Soon afterwards, Mr. Leigh came to Homeden for a long hunting visit, though I am bound to confess the ostensible object of his stay was much neglected, and he was more often the companion of our walks and rides; yet he must have liked them, for when at last he went away it was only

with the promise of returning for Christmas with his aunt.

They came, and it was a merry time to all but one poor sorrowing heart, that missed the dearest of her children from the cheerful group. None of us had the cruelty to talk of a merry Christmas in her presence, and often when I had missed her from us, and went to look for her, it was to find her poring over the poor little picture and lock of hair. She was always calm and quiet, but no one could doubt her grief that saw that pale, thin face and hollow eyes.

One evening, towards the end of my aunt's visit, Rose and I had gone to our room for the night, when I was surprised by her putting her arm round my waist and kissing me, whilst she whispered, with blushing cheeks and glistening eyes—

“Blackie, darling, could you do without me?”

“Rose, is it really so?”

“It is.”

And that was all that either of us said

on the subject then. It seemed so strange that she, who, only a few short months ago, had left home a thoughtless, laughing child, should so quickly become a woman in her manners and ideas; and not only this, but in a few more months she would have left her father's roof, to follow through weal and woe, one whom she had known so short a time. And though it had begun to strike me such might be the probable ending of the intimacy with Mr. Leigh, I had never supposed I should lose her so very soon.

Both our hearts were full, and until I had become more accustomed to the idea of losing her, it would have broken mine to talk of it. But my prayers that night were long and fervent that my precious sister might be happy. And they were answered.

IV.

My sister's engagement gave the greatest satisfaction to both families. The eldest son of Lord Leigh, and heir to a princely fortune, he had long been the hoped-for prey of many a scheming mother; and being possessed of penetration enough to see through their manoeuvres, and good taste to take no pleasure in being courted, and perhaps married, for the sake of being a *bon parti*, instead of affection for himself, he withdrew almost entirely from society, and for many years had been a wanderer in foreign lands; and his parents had almost given up the hope of seeing him abandon the aimless life he was leading, and settle down in his own country, to fulfil the duties his station and his talents required of him. His meeting with Rose was accidental, when, struck with her beauty, gentleness, and evident unconsciousness of the admiration she excited, he gave his whole heart to the simple country girl, and determined that no

effort on his part should be wanting to gain hers in return.

No wonder he succeeded; he was handsome in no common degree, dark as an Italian, with deep, lustrous eyes, that seemed to read your thoughts before you had time to put them into words, and, above all, he loved her with a devotion few women could be the object of unmoved.

Both my father and Lord Leigh particularly objected to protracted engagements, unless with some very sufficient cause, so, in spite of the extreme youth of the bride, the wedding was fixed to take place early in June, and as my mother's delicate health rendered it necessary that she should have a companion, it was decided that, instead of remaining another year in the school-room, my old governess should be at once dismissed, and I be ready to take dear Rose's place when she was gone. Miss Raine went; I was very sorry to lose her, for she was a kind old woman, much attached to us all, and I knew that after my sister's departure I should feel very lonely without

her; but my regret was swallowed up in my greater sorrow, which made everything else seem small.

The last few weeks of Rose's unmarried life we spent in visiting old friends amongst the poor in Homeden, who had known and loved Rose all her life. Nor were the kind tutor and his wife forgotten, and, to our surprise and delight, we found they had been commissioned by Walter Annesley to tell us the first opportunity, that he had heard of Hugh's safe arrival in India, and that he seemed as pleased with his new life as he had anticipated, and the climate so far did not appear to affect his health.

We settled that after Rose's wedding I should write a long letter to our dear banished one, telling him of the changes that had taken place at home since his departure, and assuring him of our unabated love and interest in all concerning him, which letter our kind friends undertook, through Walter, to forward to him.

It was a sign of the estimation our darling Rose was held in at Homeden, that her

table was not only strewn with costly presents from her rich friends and loving relations, but that many a humbler gift was placed amongst them, the fond tokens of remembrance from those affectionate villagers to her, who, when they were in trouble, had sorrowed for them, and rejoiced unfeignedly when they were prosperous. Many would not have cared for gifts in themselves so trifling, but Rose valued them (as they deserved to be) for the goodwill and kind wishes they manifested towards her in this great event of her life.

The dreaded day at last arrived, and the clash of bells from our village church awoke me to the consciousness that on that day our old home was about to lose its brightest ornament. It was a beautiful morning, and, too restless to sleep any longer, I got up, and watched from my window the school children busily employed in putting up arches of flowers for the bride to pass under.

My hands arranged my sweet sister's

veil and wreath. I stood at the altar beside her, and listened to the soft tones of her voice as she made those vows that bound her to another for life, and saw her sign her name for the last time as Rose Craven.

I have often thought since then that though I have had many and apparently greater trials in my long life, that there were few of them I felt more than this parting with my childhood's friend, for my spirit was then undisciplined, and I had not faith to feel that a Wiser Hand than mine ordered all things for the best. But I was comforted by the affectionate adieu of Charles Leigh, who gave me a brother's kiss, and bade me remember that I had not lost a sister, but that on "this happy day" he had gained one.

We were not to meet again for some months at least, as my sister's future home was not at present in a state to receive them, and Charles Leigh was glad of the opportunity of again visiting some of the scenes of his former wanderings, secure in

Rose's ready sympathy in his delight at all that was beautiful in nature.

They were gone, and it was well for me that I was obliged to rouse myself to attend to what was going on around me; I danced at the ball, saw the school children's feast, made tea for the old women, and not till every guest had departed, and I was alone, did I allow my grief to break out. The first violence over, I became more rational, thought less of myself, and more of her. When she was so happy what right had I to complain? and I soon began to picture to myself the pleasure of our next meeting. One selfish thought mingled with my anticipations of visiting Rose in her own house—it was near Walter Annesley's home, and as there seemed no other chance of seeing him again, I think I may be pardoned.

V.

I WROTE my letter to Hugh, and told him all our home news, and my mother added a postscript in her own hand, which I knew would be of more value to him than anything else I could have sent him. Poor fellow! there was little cheering to tell him for himself; my father's anger was as bitter as ever, and when Charles, at Rose's earnest request, tried to plead for Hugh, he stopped him, and begged the subject might not be mentioned again.

With difficulty I took my letter to my friends, happy in the thought that now Rose was married, we should be able to hear in a more direct manner of our brother. Alas! he never received that letter; communication with India was not easy as it is now, and it was lost.

My mother's health remained very feeble, and she rarely left her own room, so that all her cares as mistress of the house devolved upon me. Everything seemed

changed; Homeden, once so quiet, was now seldom without company, though often not fit associates for a young girl, with no one to take charge of her, as I was then. One circumstance, which amused me much, happened about this time.

Amongst our visitors, there was frequently a young man, the son of an old friend of my father's, who was awkward, shy, and stupid, to an extraordinary degree; he had been encouraged by his father to go into society, as a last hope, that being constantly with young men of his own age might improve him. He was the laughing-stock of the party, and was almost entirely left to himself, until seeing how dull he was, and thinking his shy, awkward manner arose from a painful knowledge of his own deficiencies, I took him under my protection, and did my best to amuse him. Many a time did I place my sketch-book in the greatest jeopardy of having a fall in the mud by letting him carry it, that he might have something to do with his hands, and never complained, though he always

turned the leaf of my music at the wrong time.

Imagine my surprise one day at receiving a letter from him, beginning by broadly hinting that he had long seen my affection for himself, that he had not originally intended marrying so young, but that he was sure he should add much to his happiness in securing a wife so devoted to him, and therefore offered his hand and heart to my keeping for the rest of his life. At first I did not really believe that he had written the letter, and fancied that it might be some vulgar joke to take me in, but I soon found it was serious, and that he was coming for his answer the next morning. How bewildered he looked, poor youth, when I told him that it was quite impossible I could accept his *generous* offer, and I believe had a vague idea that I did not consider myself good enough, for he hastened to assure me that I was! But I soon undeceived him, and for the future was very careful how I befriended shy young gentlemen.

VI.

A YEAR passed away, and most of it was spent at home, with the exception of occasional visits to my aunt, which I always enjoyed, she was so kind, and it was such a comfort to be with any one with whom I could discuss family matters, and I was always sure of sympathy and good advice.

Once or twice I met Walter Annesley; he was now in the Guards, and it gave me great pleasure to find him as interested in all concerning us as ever; we talked of Hugh together; he had not heard from him again, but he told me how hopefully the dear boy had written, and said, if he was but on good terms with his family, and could hear regularly from us, he should be quite happy. Walter told me how he was looking forward to seeing more of his old companions when Rose was settled in her new home.

The months that had been talked of for Charles and Rose's tour had lengthened

into more than a year, the alterations at Leigh Court had long been finished, and at last, to my great delight, they wrote to say they were on their way home. I had received many letters from Rose, and the tenour of them all was so happy; she seemed to have enjoyed her sojourn abroad extremely; but now they were journeying back, her impatience to see us all again was great, and they could scarcely travel fast enough to please her.

It was settled that as soon as they arrived in England they should come straight to Homeden. What delight I felt at seeing my darling, blooming Rose again, to find that though she had formed other ties, I had not lost my old place in her heart; how many things showed that in her long absence I had not been forgotten. Cameos from Rome, coral from Naples, a mantilla from Spain; few places had they been to where I had not been remembered. It was not the value of the gifts I cared for, but it was pleasant to find that in the midst of her

happiness she had thought of her former companion. Old woman as I am, I love them still for her dear sake!

VII.

FURTHER acquaintance with my brother-in-law made us firm friends; we had one great bond of union in our love for Rose, and there was much to like in himself. I particularly admired his great attention to my mother, and the pity he always expressed for her sorrows. He had, perhaps, a little too much of the *dolce far niente* in his disposition, and his fine abilities were too often allowed to lie dormant, but he always reminded me of a race-horse, that once aroused could soon outstrip his competitors.

They paid us a long visit, and when at last they turned their steps homeward, our

aunt Widdrington took my place in attendance on my mother, and I accompanied them.

Rose was much pleased with Leigh Court, which was a pretty place in a picturesque country, and she felt it would ever be replete with an interest to her, as the first home of her happy married life, that no future one, however splendid, could possess.

I went with them to Lord Leigh's; they were welcomed with great warmth, and I was delighted to see how my darling sister won all their hearts. She soon found Lord Leigh was very anxious to rouse his son from his inactivity, and that at the approaching general election he should come forward for the county. It was wonderful how that gentle girl influenced, without appearing to do so, her great tall husband, and he soon consented to begin the canvass, and it was not long before we were all deeply immersed in politics, and eagerly entered into all the business and excitement a hotly-contested election occasioned. Rose,

in her quiet way, made an excellent canvasser in the adjacent villages: her gentle ways and enthusiastic defence of her husband's views had more effect than all the pompous condescension usually employed at such times, and the kind, simple folks, smiling at the pretty petitioner, readily promised her their support for Charles.

At last came the polling day, and never shall I forget our delight when the show of hands was declared in favour of my brother-in-law, and how anxiously we watched the whole, until we saw him triumphantly declared the member.

All this was followed by the election ball, where we appeared in the colours, and Rose proudly listened to the congratulations of her friends on her husband's success.

I frequently saw Walter Annesley now, not in the hurry and bustle of a crowded hall or party, but in the quiet routine of everyday life, as the chosen companion in all our pursuits, and each morning found him riding over early, and never leaving

till late in the evening for home, until we always looked out for, and expected him; insensibly to ourselves, the affection we had for each other in our childhood had become a deeper feeling, and we were all in all to each other.

Ah, that was a happy, happy time! often looked back upon with pleasure. I felt I was beloved with all the strength of an honest good heart, one that neither time, distance, nor circumstances had power to change.

Not till just before my return home did he tell me what I had long felt; and it was arranged that I should be the bearer of a letter to my father from him, as I was leaving Leigh Court the next day. Charles and Rose were delighted to hear of our engagement, and the latter told me for years she had known it would be so.

We parted in the expectation of meeting soon, and the journey home was beguiled by dreams of happiness I never had before. But stern reality soon broke through these bright visions. My first care on my arrival

was to inform my father of what had transpired, and give him Walter's letter. His answer was like himself—stern, cold, relentless man. He would never consent to a daughter of his marrying into a family that stood between him and his son. And I was so impressed with the inutility of any persuasions of mine, with no one to help me who had any influence over my father, and I had seen how vain my best endeavours had been in poor Hugh's behalf, that I soon gave up the attempt in despair.

Oh, the crushing weight of misery I felt! the happy time I had spent, the thought of Walter's sorrow, and all to gratify an idle revenge, for not a word could be said against either Walter or his family; and when Sir Charles Annesley gave the cadetship to Hugh, he was quite unaware that his father would have any objection to his availing himself of it. But this my father would never believe.

So I wrote to Walter and told him the answer I had received, and begged him to

forget me, but I knew that he would not; and as soon as he had heard from me, he came to Homeden and spoke with my father himself. That was a dreadful interview: my father's cold, sarcastic answers, and Walter's first pleading, then indignant tones. It was all to no purpose; and we parted, neither of us allowing the other to bind themselves to a promise, but trusting with a certainty that required not the word to be given; and our only hope that when my father found time made no difference to our love, he would no longer oppose our marriage.

VIII.

THINGS that had formerly been a pleasure to me were now distasteful; all my favourite pursuits were neglected.

Reader, have you known what it is to

wake in a morning to dread the coming day, your weariness is so great? This I felt now; I had no one to talk to, and the future seemed too hopeless to bear thinking of.

Time passed on slowly, very slowly. My mother remained in the same state, and all chance of seeing her better had vanished. She talked little in my father's presence; but when alone with me, Hugh was her constant theme, and I was glad to tell her that he had been heard of again, and was well and tolerably happy, but complained of our never having written to him, so our letters had not reached their destination. I always exerted myself to be cheerful in her presence; she had trials enough, and why should she know that another of her children had been made unhappy, when she, poor thing! was so powerless to give us any help?

Now that Charles Leigh was in Parliament, they were obliged to be much more in London than they had originally intended. They were gone up for the season, and

knowing how miserable I was at home, and thinking a little change might do me good, Rose wrote to ask me to come to them. Gladly I obeyed the summons, and in telling her my troubles, I lightened my heart of many of them. I was always happier with Rose, and her affection made my sanguine temperament come back.

I had not long been in London, before I saw Walter, and afterwards occasionally met him in society. Our meetings were generally short, but I saw enough to be sure that my confidence in the endurance of his attachment was not misplaced, and I was satisfied.

It gave me the greatest pleasure to see Charles and Rose's happiness; she, dear little thing, entering into all his pursuits and encouraging him in what was right. He was already gaining a name in the House, and bid fair to become a great statesman. Our life was a very busy one, never a day quiet, but everything was so different to what I had been accustomed, that it amused me much.

During this time, a younger brother of Charles's was very frequently with us, and I afterwards found on my account, though I did not see it then, being much engrossed with other things. He was in the Church, and had a very nice living in the south of England. At last not knowing what to think of my easy but decidedly not encouraging manner, he confided the state of his feelings to my brother-in-law and begged him to find out if there was any chance for him. My answer, I think, may be imagined; I gave Charles permission to tell his brother the true state of the case, thinking it would be less disagreeable to him to find my heart had been given to another long before I knew him, than to be ignorant of the cause of my refusal. And I was right; though we did not meet again for some time, we were always friends, and his wife is one of the nicest people I know.

One day I was sitting by myself in the drawing-room, when Walter called; he came, he said, to say farewell; he, with a detachment of the Guards, was under

orders for immediate embarkation for Spain, and he could not go without saying good-bye to me, for years might elapse before he could come home; besides the dreadful thought, which, though we never mentioned it, chilled both our hearts, that he might be going never to return.

It was arranged that he should occasionally write to Charles Leigh, for I felt I could not bear the miserable suspense without hearing of him sometimes.

We promised each other not to despair, but hope for happier days, and I bid him farewell. But I saw him once again; it was a calm, bright morning, and a crowd was assembled at the Tower stairs to see the troops embark. They came, and it was a dreadful sight, the wretched semblance of happiness with real heart misery behind. The bands playing, the shouts of the crowd, the hurry and bustle, and many of the men in a fearful state of intoxication; and every now and then you saw a face so full of wretchedness, the eyes dim, the manly lip quivering, as they parted with

wives, children, and parents, many, oh, how many, for ever!

One look, one wave of the hand from Walter, and they were gone from my sight.

IX.

I WAS more used to trials now, and, I hope, had learnt to bear them better; and though there were times when my anxiety got the better of my resolves, yet in general my spirits were good, and I did my best to interest myself in what was going on around me.

I stayed with my sister, until they left London, and then went with them to Brighton. The sea seems suitable to people either in joy or sorrow; its soft murmurs sympathize with the one and console the other. I could watch the beautiful waves rolling for hours; and

delighted in going out in one of those pretty little boats, with their white sails, which at a distance look like a bird skimming the ocean; and one's thoughts seem to leave this weary world of ours, and soar to a happier one.

I spent a month at Brighton very pleasantly, wandering all day with my sister and her husband, and I was delighted to see that the breezes brought back the colour to Rose's cheek, which had been sadly faded by the work and gaiety of the past season.

Before I went back to Homeden, Charles had heard from Walter of his having joined his regiment in safety; he had had another letter from Hugh, saying that he must not expect to hear regularly from him for some time, as he was going up the country. His old affection for his mother seemed unabated and many were his questions about her. His letter was a long one, and peculiarly interesting to us, as it told of his love for and engagement to a Miss Russel. Lucy, he said, had first taken his fancy

from her resemblance to Rose, and soon he learnt to love her for herself. She had done her best to console him for his absence from all he loved in England, listened with unwearied attention and interest to his tales of home, and at last had promised to become his wife, at some future day. "For it must be long," wrote Hugh, "before I shall be in a position to marry."

Rose and I wrote dear Hugh a long letter, in which we told him how interested we were in all concerning him, and wished we could make acquaintance with our future sister. I also told him (what I had never mentioned before), of the affection which subsisted between myself and his early and constant friend—glossed over our separation and its cause, as one does by instinct when writing to dear relations far away of any melancholy subject, knowing you will not be by to watch the effect of your intelligence, and soothe and comfort them under it. And I hinted in conclusion that though, like him, Walter and I should have to wait, we might yet be happy in the end.

I found all at Homeden much as usual; but I was able to make my dear mother happy by my account of Hugh. My father I scarcely ever saw, as he was seldom at home. I found that during my absence, my aunt and he had quarrelled so much, that she only waited till my return, and then left immediately; but I did not discover the cause of their disagreement.

I was determined that every hour should be so occupied, that no time would be left for dwelling on one topic, to the exclusion of any other interest, which had been too much the case before my visit to London. But I had come back in a happier frame of mind, determined to face bravely the inevitably long engagement I knew was now before me; and so fit myself for the soldier's wife I still hoped to be.

Our school, hitherto a very primitive one, I resolved should now undergo a reform; for though my power of making alterations was extremely limited, I found I could do what was really most required, for I am and always was of opinion, that a

good plain education is the best for the lower classes. Writing was a thing unknown then in our village, and as I could not find any one that would undertake to teach it, I took it into my own hands; and though I have no natural pleasure in the occupation, when I found what progress my children made, I felt quite repaid for my labours.

I had always been in the habit of going about amongst the poor people, and I now did so more than ever, and many a lesson did I take from the sick beds and frequent troubles of the poor cottagers, in many cases borne with patience and fortitude that made me ashamed of repining at my comparatively much easier fate.

With these employments, and my attendance on my mother, and other home duties, time passed on quicker, and my spirits were very equal, except when news of any importance was expected from Spain, then the suspense was dreadful. When such was the case, and I could not be spared to be at Leigh Court, Rose and her

husband came to us. With the news of an engagement there was always a letter from Walter, and my thankfulness could not be great enough that in the midst of so many dangers, he had hitherto mercifully been preserved.

X.

Six years rolled away, with little happening to relate. Walter was still in Spain, and there seemed no chance of his returning for the present.

My mother seemed imperceptibly to grow weaker, and less capable of any exertion. I did not often leave her, except to see Rose, who, dear girl, was the same happy creature she had ever been, and with her husband and beautiful boy (whose birth I should have said was a great rejoicing to both families, not only as an heir to rank and wealth, but for the delight

he was to his parents and the interest we felt in Rose's child) she had nothing to wish for, unless it were that her sister was happy as herself.

Charles and Rose had been spending a long time with us, and we had been enjoying the beautiful summer weather together, when the news of the siege of St. Sebastian arrived, and no letter as usual from Walter. They calmed my fears, and I tried to believe that either he had not had leisure to write, or the letter, perhaps, was lost, and I determined to wait patiently until more particulars came, and I returned with Rose to her own home, comforted in knowing that there I should hear without delay when fresh tidings came.

One day I was in my own room, spending my time in prayer, that whatever might be the result, I might have strength given me to bear it with resignation; I knew that I must soon hear the truth, and I dreaded to have a confirmation of my fears. I heard Rose's step, it was slow, and as if she came unwillingly, and I knew she had no good

news to tell. I opened the door; she was pale and grave, and I took the paper from her hand, and so convinced was I of harm, that it was a relief to find his name not amongst the killed, but dangerously wounded—wounded in a foreign land, with no one to care for him. “Oh, Walter, Walter! it was hard to know you were suffering, and not be near, or to have the consolation of knowing that you were taken care of!”

News of the battle was continually pouring in, and Walter was spoken of as having distinguished himself; and at last, to my great delight, a few brief lines were received by Charles from him, telling him that he was quickly recovering—his wound had been more severe than dangerous—and that he was coming home, intrusted with despatches to Government. Everybody talked of the hero who was returning loaded with honours, and recommended for promotion. He had already received the Cross of the Spanish Military Order of

St. James, for distinguished service in the field.

My spirits rose with all this good news, and I could not help hoping that should Walter love me still, all my father's objections might yet be overruled, for when all others extolled must he ever condemn.

XI.

ONE evening, a short time after the events recorded in the last chapter, I had come in from my usual walk, and gone to my own room, when Rose came to me and desired me to go down stairs directly. I looked at her flushed cheek and happy face, and begged to know what she had to tell; but no, she would not answer me, but with a hearty kiss she sent me away. As I came near the drawing-room the truth flashed upon me. I threw open the door, and

Walter, now Colonel Annesley, stood before me, my own dear Walter still, but how unlike the boyish lover I had parted with six years ago. The slight, graceful figure I remembered so well had changed into a strong, well-knit, soldier-like form; his once fair complexion had been bronzed with the hot suns of Spain, and his long moustaches served still more to alter him; but when he spoke, his voice and the sweet expression of his face were still the same, and the years that had elapsed since his departure seemed melted away, and he was all to me he ever had been; and in the pleasure of seeing each other again, past unhappiness was forgotten.

But lest I deceive my readers with too brilliant a description of him I loved so well, I must be truthful enough to add that Walter was not handsome; beyond a fine tall figure and open countenance, he had no pretension to beauty, and some might have even called him plain, but not many, for there was much in that face to atone for irregularity of feature. Expression

that varied with every thought and feeling, which is so often wanting in handsome men.

And days and weeks flew past in listening to the interesting accounts of the beautiful country he had seen; and I could dwell for hours on the sketches he had made, for Walter was a clever draughtsman, and whenever a little time was at his disposal he had amused himself with depicting the scenes before him, to show to me on his return. He was still suffering from his wound, and in the long visit he paid at Leigh Court, we had many pleasant drives together, and I watched with delight how quickly he regained his strength; and when, not long after, the War in the Peninsular was brought to a termination, my fears for his future safety were removed.

At last it was impossible for my return home to be longer postponed; and Walter and I determined that another trial for my father's consent to our marriage should now be attempted, not without a hope that time might have made a difference in his deter-

mination, as on Walter's return my sister had written to him to say that it would be impossible to prevent my seeing Walter constantly, if I remained with her, and no remark had been made on her letter, and I was allowed still to stay there.

But on our again asking his consent, his answer was the same as before, and we had reason to think that his object was to drive me to marry against his wishes, that he might have that excuse to deprive me of any fortune, as he had done poor Hugh, and Walter tried hard to persuade me to do so, assuring me that money was no object to him, for he had enough for both. And feeling sure it was the truth, and with not the slightest doubt of his affection, I was much inclined to listen to his pleading; but then I looked on my poor dear mother, and thought how lonely the few remaining years of her life would be without me, for since Hugh had gone, she seemed to have in a measure transferred her affection to me, and her almost child-like confidence in my never leaving her was very affecting,

and should I, who had promised Hugh to be her comfort, leave her now, when I knew that our separation would be complete? I therefore told Walter it could not be, we must still wait, and he consented that it should be so, content with my promise of never wedding any one but him.

My mother's health was such as to preclude the possibility of her life being prolonged for any length of time, and whenever my care of her should be over, I promised I would no longer wait.

Hugh had not been heard of for a long, long time, and Walter was unable to obtain any tidings of him, but in his last letter he had warned us of the impossibility of writing regularly, and so we still hoped a letter might come at last.

XII.

How often in life's journey we seem to arrive at resting-places, times of quiet monotony with few pleasures, few sorrows, and the wheel of time appears to stand still, but is, nevertheless, quietly but surely moving on. To the young, who have known no trials, and whose hearts are full of hope, such times are very irksome, and they almost long for anything to break the dull sameness of their days, and not until many a rough battle with sorrow has sobered them, do they feel the value of such rest.

But to me, who for so long had known the misery of prolonged suspense, like a sword always hanging over my head, it was welcomed with pleasure. I was no longer very young, and many things had combined to make me old of my age. My father was seldom at home, and when he did stay there a few days, his rough, unkind manner to my mother, and sullenness to me, rendered it a

subject of thankfulness when he again left us. Alone we were always happy, and it was a great consolation to me for not having left her, to see how I contributed to her comfort.

I spent that Christmas at Leigh, surrounded by all I loved best, and little did we think, as we danced the old year out, and the new year in, what changes would take place before that day twelve months had also passed away.

“Dance on, dance on, be blithe and gay,
Nor pause to think the while
That ere that year hath passed away,
Ye, too, may cease to smile.”

And I, proud and happy in the affection of one so noble and good as my Walter, was more like the merry “Blackie” of former days, than I had been for many a long year.

XIII.

I CAN well remember that beautiful spring, and how I drove my mother out every day that she might rejoice with me in the return of warm weather, and listen to the glad song of the lark, till even her pale grave face was soothed into smiles, and we were very happy.

But I was not to enjoy this peace of mind long; war was again raging, and I was in constant fear that Walter would be required to join his regiment, and I wrote to beg he would leave the army directly; but I received a letter from him regretting much that he had no time to bid me farewell, as he had received orders to immediately proceed to Brussels.

“But bear up, dear one,” wrote he; “think of the many dangers I have been in before, and pray that the same Providence that watched over me then, may do so still; but even should your prayers not be answered, I know you would not wish your

Walter to shrink from his duty, and rather mourn his death, than see him live a disgrace to his name and profession, by drawing back when his services are most required by his king and country. But this I promise, should I live to see the termination of this war, my fighting days shall end also."

As soon as Rose heard the news of Walter's departure, she sent for me, and we together impatiently waited for the news of the great battle that we knew was expected to take place. It came soon enough, but no particulars; and strange as it may seem, I did not feel the fear I usually did, for I had become so used to Walter escaping unhurt in so many dangers, that I could not believe he would not in this also.

The newspapers came, full of the names of those who had fallen, and with pale and pitying faces, my brother and sister pointed out to me Walter's name; and though for some time I lost all consciousness, when at last I recovered from my swoon, great was

their astonishment when they found I did not, could not believe he was dead. I thought of all the mistakes I had ever heard of (and there were many during that long war), when those who were supposed to be dead, were afterwards found to be living, and I quoted the account of Walter's wound at St. Sebastian, till I persuaded myself it must be so, and was strengthened in my belief by the knowledge that beyond that one mention of his name in the paper, no intelligence of his death had reached his family as yet. Weeks passed on, and I was worn to a shadow of my former self, till the very domestics dreaded the sight of those wild black eyes, as I flitted about the house, like an uneasy spirit, and grave fears were entertained for my reason.

At last one day I received a letter directed in an unknown hand; on my opening it an enclosure fell to the ground. I broke the seal, and beheld a lock of black hair—it was one of mine, and then I knew Walter was indeed dead. I remembered well his cutting it off when we were first

engaged, and promising to keep it until death. On the paper which contained it, was written, "Pray that we may meet in heaven."

Ah, Walter! since then nearly two score years have passed away, and the hair, then black as the raven's wing, now rivals the driven snow; but never has a day gone by, without that prayer ascending on high, and I live in humble trust that the time will come when it will be answered, and we shall meet to part no more.

When time had brought composure and fortitude to bear my great grief, I read the letter which enclosed my Walter's farewell; I found it was from a friend and brother officer of his. He told me that on the evening before the battle of Waterloo, Walter was very grave, and seemed to feel he should not survive the morrow's contest, and had requested him, in case of his falling, to see that the enclosed note should be given to me.

"And," wrote he, "the morning came, and after fighting long and bravely, Walter

Annesley fell, covered with wounds; and so died as brave an officer and kind a friend as any in the British army, and long and sincerely will his loss be mourned by the whole regiment. He was buried on the field of Waterloo."

XIV.

AND so the one bright vision of my youth was gone, and I who for so long had looked forward to having one day a dear companion, friend, adviser, to whom every thought of my heart might be confided, with a knowledge that the smallest thing that interested me would find importance in his eyes, was now, poor weary Blackie, to tread the dreary path of life alone. Not alone, Blackie, for surely He, who promised to be a Father to the fatherless and a consolation to the widow, did not forget thee in thy trouble.

The certainty regarding my Walter's fate, was easier to bear after the first shock, than the wild state of mingled grief and hope I had felt before, and time brought resignation.

At last I prepared to return to my home, thankful to have had so long a respite, in which to regain command over myself, to fulfil my various duties as formerly; and though it almost broke my heart to leave my kind consolers, I felt it was time I should do so, and departed on my journey.

In every town, and many a country village, had I to endure the sight of peace rejoicings; and as I gazed at my all but widow's mourning, how thoughtless and unkind it seemed to me, that countrymen should be celebrating with gladness, what had so lately been the death-scene of so many of their brave soldiers. But so it must ever be, and in a nation's good we must forget individual sorrows.

My reception at home was soothed by no kind sympathy: my mother's eye saw no change, and my father merely noticed it by

increased roughness of manner; but lest we paint human nature blacker than it is, let us hope that it was assumed, to hide remorse for the past.

And so a year passed away; our long cherished hope of again hearing from Hugh seemed now at an end, as the one channel of communication was cut off, for should Hugh be living, he would probably hear of Walter's early death, and we knew not that he had ever received intelligence of my sister's marriage, but happily for her peace of mind, my mother's faculties had so far failed, that she never now talked or seemed to think upon her favourite theme.

At last I was gladdened by once more welcoming Rose home again; she came in Charles's absence in Scotland, and was accompanied by my handsome little nephew Charley, and their presence cast a gleam of sunshine on old Homeden, which for some time blinded us to the fact of our mother's changed looks; but when the first joy of her arrival was over, we were no longer deceived, particularly when Rose told me

what an alteration she saw in her, which was unobserved by me, her constant companion.

So we agreed to lose no time, and wrote for Sir Henry Halford, the first physician of the day, to immediately proceed to Homeden, and the time drew near when he was expected. All that day she appeared so languid, and her pale lips so blue, that at length Rose and I persuaded her to lie down quietly in her own room, and hoping that she might sleep, we stationed ourselves in the ante-room, anxiously awaiting the physician's arrival. In a short time we heard wheels, and hastened down to receive Sir Henry, and we proceeded at once to conduct him to our mother's room, as, should it be heart complaint (as we imagined), no time should be lost. It was late in the evening, and we entered without a candle, for fear of disturbing her; by the uncertain firelight we saw that she had moved from her sofa to the arm-chair, and appeared to be asleep.

The doctor advanced, and leant over her

chair a moment anxiously, then took her hand, and turning to us, shook his head, and said—

“Too late, too late! this is no case for me; your mother’s suffering in this life is over.”

And he hastened away to obtain lights, while we, her horror-stricken children, chafed her cold hands, with the lingering hope that the spark of life might not have wholly fled. While doing so, a picture fell to the ground, and we found that she had indeed died, gazing on the image of her long lost treasure, thus appearing to have regained at the last the recollection that had latterly left her.

Rose, who had always had the best influence over my father, undertook to inform him of the loss we had all sustained, and she assured me that at first his grief was violent, and she believed sincere; but, as ever, turning from all that gave him pain or trouble, he allowed those duties, which should have been his own, to devolve upon us, and ere my poor mother’s remains were

consigned to the grave, he had regained his usual spirits.

Charles was expected the day before the funeral, and ere his arrival, Rose and I entered that darkened room, to bid a last farewell; and as we gazed on the dear pale face, on which, in place of its usual sorrowful expression, there rested a happy smile, we felt that regret for her was indeed misplaced, and it was hard for me not to envy that calm happiness, and wish myself, like her, at peace.

XV.

I WILL not dwell on this time of sorrow; only those who have lost a kind and tender parent can sympathize with the grief we felt, nor know how I missed that gentle creature, for whose sake I had been stimulated to exert myself once more, when mis-

fortunes for a time had overwhelmed me. But Rose, my sister, was with me, and we mourned together, and were together comforted in the hope that she was gone to a happier world.

We remained at Homeden for some time, not liking to leave my father; and it was not till he had started as usual for the Moors, did we turn our steps to Leigh Court, and I entered on a time of peace, "The Valley of Ease," in my progress through life, in the companionship of my brother and sister, very different to the happiness I had once pictured; but the days of building "castles in the air," for myself at least, had fled for ever, and I had learnt to be content with the present hour.

I continued to go to Homeden at intervals, when my father was at home, but my visits were anything but pleasant ones, and I always hailed with gladness the time of my return.

About this time, I first made an acquaintance with Captain Howard, the friend to whom my Walter had expressed his last

wishes, and who had conveyed to me the tidings of my great loss. I found him all that I had imagined a friend of *his* must be; and from at first only feeling an interest in him for the sake of *him* who was *gone*, as the intimacy increased, and I found how kind and good he was, I almost felt a sisterly affection for him, and when he suddenly left for foreign service, we all missed the cheerful companion who had become so domesticated with us.

But we soon had more serious affairs to occupy our thoughts. Lord Leigh's West Indian property had long wanted some conscientious person to overlook it, and that having been neglected for many years, it had become advisable that it should undergo personal examination by some of the family, and Charles Leigh having just then the offer of a diplomatic appointment of some importance in that country, he was urged by his father to take it, as during his residence there, he would have every opportunity of discovering the real state of the country, and if possible restore it to its

original prosperity. After much consideration the post was accepted, and my sister and her husband prepared for their voyage.

So it happened that once more I had to part from all I loved best on earth, and watch with streaming eyes the vessel fade from my sight. And I then returned to Homenen.

XVI.

AND now let me commit to oblivion, as quickly as possible, a period of which I have nothing pleasing to relate. Many a time did I meditate leaving my father's house, and going to live with my aunt, Mrs. Widdrington, but I thought it my duty not to do so, unless it should become absolutely necessary, and tried to hope that patience and forbearance under provocation would at last bring its reward.

The West Indian mail was the only plea-

surable excitement I had, and most anxiously did I always look forward to its arrival, hoping every time to receive the longed-for intelligence, that at last they were returning home, but, alas! it did not come; much work had to be done, before the just result of Charles Leigh's sojourn there could appear, and till then, he did not wish to leave. They had now another child, a daughter, and Rose, in her love for her absent sister, had called her after me, and pleased herself with a fancied resemblance between us, and many long letters were written, of which my little namesake was the principal subject.

Rose and her husband had made many ineffectual attempts to hear something of Hugh, and at last they learned that a year or two ago, he had retired from the army, and after that, no trace of him could be discovered, but it was supposed he had left the country, but the cause of his having done so was a mystery, and many and grievous were our disappointments at not being able to find out his retreat.

I frequently visited my kind friends, the tutor and his wife, partly in the vain hope that they might some time hear from Hugh, as they were now almost the only people he would be likely to correspond with in England, but they were as ignorant of his fate as we were.

It was my greatest comfort when I was able to spend a quiet afternoon with them, talking of my dear brother, and his still dearer companion; they had truly loved them both, and whilst they grieved with me over the past, they taught me resignation and hope for the future, not from cold *precept*, but by their own *example*. They were now very old, and out of a large family, not one of their children was now living; in early life they had been very poor, and now that they had attained to affluence, those for whom they had struggled were resting quietly in the old churchyard, yet not a murmur escaped this good old couple. Often, with tears in their eyes, used they to tell me, they did not wish their dear ones back again, trusting they were gone where

they were far happier than they could ever have made them, and looking forward to the time when they too should lie with the line of graves they so often visited, and their spirits had rejoined their children above.

Dear old people! long ago has your wish been gratified, and often as I pass your last resting-places, do I remember your words, and try to emulate your simple trust in God.

XVII.

SEVEN years had passed away since my sister and her husband had bid farewell to their native land, when I received a letter from Rose, telling me that my dear little namesake had been very ill, her life even despaired of, but that she had been mercifully spared to them, and the doctors now said, the only hope of her regaining her

health, and, in fact, growing up at all, was for her instantly to be sent to England, in the hope that its sharp breezes would strengthen her feeble frame, and stop the unnatural growth of mind and body which the heat of the tropics occasions; and that Charles, being much interested in the success of the mission he had undertaken, had given up all thoughts of coming home himself for an indefinite period, and they had at last decided to entrust their darling to her loving aunt, to be taken care of by her, till their own return, and intended sending her by the next mail, as there was an opportunity then of putting her in charge of some friends, who were returning to England, and they trusted to my meeting her at Liverpool immediately on her arrival.

Reader! imagine one who for many years had had little to interest her in life, and you will feel better than I have power to write, the delight, the joy of my heart, at the prospect of so soon having my little niece, in whose restoration to health, and future growth and happiness, I should feel

so strong an interest; and again and again did I thank my sister for parting with her treasure, and many were the resolutions I made to do my best to supply a mother's place to the little one.

What a state of anxiety was I in, from the time of receiving the letter till I started for Liverpool (which I did, long before there was any occasion). Often in the night did I sit up and listen to the wind, till I had pictured in my head a shipwreck, and all its attendant horrors, and every one on board perishing; then, again, I feared a return of her malady had perhaps even now laid her low; in short, there was no horror I did not think of, and every day when I was at Liverpool, I used to inquire if the mail was not later than usual, if it had been rough weather at sea, till I verily believe the people thought I must be expecting a very different person from the little fairy form that I had at last the joy of clasping in my arms; and thanks to a fair and prosperous voyage, though slight and

delicate looking, all trace of illness had vanished.

As I had been led to suppose, little Isabella's manners were far more like a grown-up person's than most children's of her age; probably the necessity of being very quiet the greater part of the day, in consequence of the climate, had given more time for thought, and she being naturally a very clever child, had profited by it in an unusual degree; still I could not help concurring in the opinion of the doctors, that that delicate little frame could not long have borne such hot-house culture, but would have faded away like a lovely exotic of the land that had been her birth-place.

Instead of meeting me with the shyness I expected, she seemed delighted at finding one she could greet as a friend on her arrival in a strange country, heartily returned my embrace, and when I released, and held her at a distance to try and catch a resemblance of Rose in her child, she fearlessly returned my gaze, and said—

“So you are the dear aunt ‘Blackie’
mamma talks of so much.”

XVIII.

VAINLY did I try to see in the flashing black eyes, pale olive complexion, and long dark waving hair of my little niece, anything to remind me of Rose, there was not a shadow of resemblance, but in every look and movement of the little girl did I see something to make me think of her father. Unless under strong excitement, she was a very sweet-tempered, quiet child, more so than I liked to see in one so young, and inwardly determined that my first effort should be to try and remove the habitual languid dislike to any exertion she betrayed, and made up my mind to do my best for her to have the companionship of children of her own age, instead of letting her be constantly with me.

During our necessary stay in Liverpool, and on our journey home, she interested me extremely by the questions and remarks she was continually making on everything that passed around her, and nothing seemed to go unnoticed, even when to all appearance she was engaged with other things, and her many comparisons between this country and the land she had left, were very amusing, being all at present so evidently in favour of the latter.

Greatly to my satisfaction, she was most affectionately received by her grandfather, who always continued to make the greatest pet of her, and it was not long before I had reason to regret the spoiling she obtained, and I was continually annoyed when she was with him, by any trifling order from me to the little girl being the signal for his putting himself in opposition to my authority; and as he generally contrived to advocate what he knew the child liked best herself, it gave me great trouble to make her do as I wished, and if it had not been for an affectionate disposition, which made

her almost invariably yield, when she saw how annoyed I was by her disobedience, all my endeavours would have been useless, for though by degrees it was thoroughly overcome, she had naturally an extremely passionate temper when her wishes were thwarted, but then it was fully atoned for by the penitence that quickly followed her fault.

Before many months had passed away, a difference, greater than I had at first dared to hope for in so short a time, had taken place in the appearance of Isabella (or Little Blackie, as she laughingly called herself); the warm glow of health now bloomed in her rosy cheeks, and instead of the short quiet walks we took on her first arrival, it was now as much as I could manage to keep pace with the laughing sprite that was always dancing on before me, enjoying the cold sharp air, that a short time ago she would have done anything rather than encounter, and beguiling the way with her innocent prattle, till a change almost as great as what I have described in her,

might be seen in me; I was not always dwelling on the past, and instead of the quiet, melancholy-looking woman I had been, there was a lightness in my step, and general hopefulness about me to which I had long been a stranger.

XIX.

A YEAR had passed away since my little Isabella's arrival, and on a beautiful autumn evening, when the glorious sun was sinking to rest, and gilding with its last rays the pretty village church, and giving a silver-like hue to the branches of the weeping willow which hung over my mother's grave, I had come forth alone to bid a long and sad farewell to that hallowed spot. Ere the sun that was now sinking had again risen, I should have left Homeden perhaps for ever, it was no longer a home for me, for *her* dear name and memory were to be desecrated by being given to the wretch who

for so many years had deprived her of the affection of her husband.

With all the bitterness of mingled grief and anger had I expostulated with him, but in vain, and I had then written to my aunt, Mrs. Widdrington, from whom I had a speedy answer, giving a hearty and affectionate promise of a home to myself and my little niece; she then told me the sad news my letter conveyed she had much feared might come to pass, and she had long been aware of the cause of his strange indifference to his own family, but had trusted that repentance with advancing years might come at last. I knelt down on the green sods, and wept many bitter tears, when I thought of the melancholy life of her who lay below, and always so meekly borne, and that even now her memory was to be so grossly insulted by one who had never known her worth; and as I thought on my own lonely lot, with so few left to feel any interest in me, and cast out from the shelter of my own father's roof, I was for a moment almost angry, that I, too, had not

found a similar resting-place, when the soft evening air brought me the sound of my darling's voice as she was returning from her walk, and it seemed to be as an answer rebuking my repining, "That is your consolation and business upon the earth, do it, and murmur no more," and I rose from the grave strengthened, and bid adieu with restored calmness to all the cherished haunts of our childhood. When in the gray light of early morning the carriage quickly bore my little Isabella and me from the old house and the sorrowing faces of the aged villagers, I wept, but not bitter tears like those I had shed the night before, and set myself resolutely to think of happier and better things, instead of dwelling on what was inevitable.

XX.

LATE in the evening of the same day, we arrived at our journey's end, and were re-

ceived most affectionately by the kind old lady with whom we were now to live; her advancing years made her glad of a companion in one she had known so long, and the winning ways of my little Isabella soon found their way to Mrs. Widdrington's heart, and she was never so happy as when she was listening to the merry discourse of her little niece. It is curious how fond very old people are, almost invariably, of young children. Their plays and merry voices sounding along the passages, must recall from memory's sleep the voices of other children, some perhaps long dead, whilst others are now living in far distant homes from the one that gave them birth. It was not children of her own my aunt remembered, for she had never had any, but she had taken an almost mother's interest in Rose and myself, and perchance her thoughts went even further back to the time when she and my mother were laughing children, little dreaming of the many sorrows one at least was to encounter in after years.

Well can I remember our first winter spent in Heath, which was a great agricultural village; it was here that my darling was first taught lessons of charity and pity for the suffering poor, and busily did her little fingers work, to do her share in making useful Christmas gifts for the deserving old people.

I was particularly pleased to see Isabella so readily become interested in these pursuits, as in the West Indies unfortunately no such feeling of sympathy between the different classes of society existed; and from the neglect of years on the part of those who should have struggled to introduce a different state of affairs, the poor Indian had become too debased a creature for any trust to be placed in him, until time and consistent kindness on the part of their employers, had at last brought their fruits; and I had feared that from having been accustomed, by her residence in that country, to see the harsh treatment and distrust on the part of the master, and stolid indifference, carelessness to the interests of their

employer, and dishonesty of the poor, that there might have been some prejudices to overcome, ere the natural kindliness of my little niece's disposition shone forth.

But there was too much of my sister in her child's nature, and her gentle example and admonitions had prevented any such harm resulting from ignorance or thoughtlessness.

Last Christmas, which I spent surrounded by bright young faces, has brought with particular vividness to my memory the time I am now writing about, when I was awoke from my sleep by my little treasure to listen to the clear voices of the village children, as they sang in the early morning their song of rejoicing at the return of the blessed day, which had brought such glad tidings to this sinful world, and I explained to little Isabella the origin of this sweet old custom, now so nearly given up. And I can feel now the pleasure I experienced in the course of the day, finding my child employed in reading from the Sacred Volume the story I had told her to an aged woman

who had once been a servant of my aunt's, and who was now on her annual visit to her.

XXI.

As soon as we had entered upon the new year, I began more earnestly to attend to the education of my little charge than I had hitherto done, as everything had for a time been given up in the cause of health, but her's had now become so thoroughly re-established, that I felt lessons must no longer be neglected, and for the present I determined she should have no governess but myself. She was quick almost to a fault, as from the ease with which she was accustomed to master any difficulty, she was wholly without that necessary, though often despised virtue, application; and I soon found had a great dislike to any study that required trouble. For instance, with music, almost any air she heard she could

sit down at the piano and play, without previously having learnt a note, and having this gift, it was very difficult to make her see the necessity of constant practice; and so it was with all her studies.

Fortunately for me (who was, perhaps, over-anxious that Isabella should make such progress as to please her parents on their return), I by chance found the best incentive to exertion. Soon after the period I have been writing about, her brother Charley came to spend the end of his holidays with us. Ever since his father's and mother's departure, he had been at a small private school, kept by a country clergyman, but at the end of that vacation he was to go to Eton. During his visit the children began to compare notes of their proficiency in their various studies, and my little girl soon had the mortification of finding herself distanced, even in those accomplishments which seem almost exclusively a woman's province. When he had first gone to school, Charley was by far the youngest boy there, and, in consequence,

had become the especial charge of the daughters of his tutor, who had taught him many of their own favourite pursuits; and he could play on the piano, sing, and talk French much better than most boys of his age..

Isabella had no sooner become aware of his superiority in knowledge than I discovered much greater diligence and anxiety to improve, and it then occurred to me that a companion of her own age to learn with her would in a great measure mitigate the evils I had to contend with, for now Charley was going to Eton, I knew that in all probability he would no longer improve in the gentler studies to which he had been accustomed, and very likely ere we saw him again would have learned to be ashamed of his proficiency in them.

So it would not do to trust to competition with him, for with very little trouble she would easily catch him up, and the friendly rivalry then ceasing would leave everything in its former state; and besides these considerations, I was afraid that Isa-

bella, being the only child in the house, that my aunt and myself might unconsciously spoil and make her selfish, whilst, if she had a companion, she would learn to give way to others, and I determined to most carefully avoid showing partiality.

I accordingly set about finding a little girl to bring up with Isabella, and at last fixed upon a little French girl, the daughter of some poor refugees, who had been found for me by my old governess Miss Raine. Pauline Mon-Pesant had been brought up carefully in the Protestant faith, and her parents were only too thankful to part with their child for a few years in order that she might have the advantage of a far better education than they could afford to give her, which would enable her when she was grown up to earn a livelihood in their own country.

Pauline Mon-Pesant first appeared in our social circle on a fine summer's evening, and as she stepped from the carriage which had met her at the last stage of her journey, the first glance assured us all how

different she was from any English child: instead of appearing overwhelmed with shyness, as many children of her age would have been in her position, so far from all her friends (she was only ten years old), or seeming to ape the assured manner of an older person, she advanced to meet me (who was the only one of the group she had seen before), and answered all my questions with such a charming mixture of timidity and gentleness that it was impossible for any one to regard her except with admiration, or address her as the child she really was. Pauline was not pretty, for she had the dark tawny skin usual with foreigners, and there was not sufficient contrast between her complexion and the colour of her hair and eyes, but the grace of her trim little figure, the smoothness of her long hair gathered up in a roll at the top of her head, as it was then worn by grown-up people, made one almost imagine her so. The colours in her simple dress assimilated well together, and even the old

fashioned cut of them was becoming to her.

After my aunt and I had conversed with her a few minutes, I took her to Isabella, who listened with mingled shyness and anxiety to understand the long flowing speech Pauline instantly began, and to which she could only answer by a short and unconnected reply, and I began to fear it would be some time before they were companions to each other; but children, when left to themselves, soon forget their first embarrassment and begin to fraternise, and towards the end of the evening they were talking together a somewhat curious medley of their different languages, and laughing merrily at their mutual mistakes.

Pauline Mon-Pesant was not long at Heath before I recommenced the usual daily lessons, as I was very curious to learn the acquirements of the little girl, and judge if they were of such an order as to allow of her keeping pace with Isabella; I found, as I became better acquainted with

her, that she had evidently been carefully and well instructed by her parents, and though perhaps not possessed of such natural talents as my little niece, her superior application and the year and a half's advantage she had in age, would enable her easily to keep up with her. And instead of the former inattention and want of interest in her studies, which I had formerly complained of in Isabella, it became a pleasant task to instruct such clever, happy children as my little charges were.

It was not only in her studies that my child benefited by her companion: the little remains of the lassitude and idleness formerly peculiar to her were entirely rooted out by the gay little Frenchwoman, whose natty fingers were always busily employed in one way or other, and she was soon busy teaching Isabella some of the many beautiful kinds of fancy needlework she understood; whilst Isabella in her turn used to instruct Pauline how to ride the quiet little Shetland pony, which was their joint property, and at last managed to inspire her

with courage enough to enjoy a steady canter, but never to join her sometimes too wild gallops, or, as Isabella used laughingly to declare, to sit otherwise than as a French peasant going to market.

The autumn of that year we all removed for a couple of months, to Scarborough which was then a quiet seaside town, and not the large place it has now become, and both the children equally enjoyed their long rambles on the sands in search of seaweed and agates. It was a pleasant time for me also, who am passionately fond of the northern coast, for I could sit watching my little friends playing at a distance, and see the beautiful rough tide sweep in, and look back to my last visit to the sea in company with my own dear sister, now so far away.

We had not been long at Scarborough before, to my surprise, I met Captain Howard, who told me he was come there with his mother for the benefit of his health, having come home on sick leave from India; and he was indeed much changed since

our last meeting. I was very glad to see him, not only from old associations, though they had much to do with it, but it was impossible to meet any one so unfeignedly pleased to see me, and interested in talking of those I loved best, without being glad also, and to me it was an unusual treat to meet such a friend.

And my aunt and I soon became acquainted with Mrs. Howard, who was a charming old lady, and devoted to this her only son; she used to confide to us her hope that he would never return to India, or leave her again during the few remaining years of her life; and I used to think of my own dear mother's parting with Hugh, and sympathize with Mrs. Howard's wish to keep her treasure near her.

And then I learnt what accounted to me for a degree of *brusquerie* and dislike to ladies' society, which we had all noticed formerly at Leigh Court in Captain Howard, but which had gradually worn off at the sight of the bitter grief I was struggling to control, and a kind and almost gentle

manner had taken its place, which always continued to me.

In early life Captain Howard had been the victim of an unfortunate attachment; unfortunate from the faithlessness of its object, who, during his temporary absence with his regiment, had found a richer suitor, and married him, thus well nigh breaking the young and trusting heart, who had loved her with all the intensity of a first attachment; and no longer being able to endure the neighbourhood of one who had once been so dear to him, he left his once happy home, and determined instead of leaving the army, as he had been on the eve of doing, to make it his profession, and try if stirring scenes and distant lands would drive away the memory of his sorrow.

This melancholy story gave Captain Howard a still greater right to sympathy from me, for, though in different ways, had we not both been unfortunate? and I used to observe with gladness the interested and more cheerful views he seemed to take of

everything, instead of the gloomy air he had formerly worn, and I hoped that time had softened his early grief, and that his mother would not be obliged to part again with her only son.

There were few days without our passing some time in each other's society, for my aunt frequently used to go out driving with Mrs. Howard (whom she had known in former days), and the children were so fond of her son, that they never saw him without running to meet him, and persuade him to accompany them in their scrambles, which he always willingly did; and when at last they were tired of their climbing from rock to rock, he used to join me, and we walked together watching Isabella and Pauline busy with their spades upon the sands, and talked of Rose and her husband, Leigh Court, and days gone by. And I used to question him about India, and if he had ever heard or seen anything of Hugh, but he could not recall any person or circumstance that gave me any clue to his whereabouts.

Once or twice I remember speaking of Walter as I liked to do to those who had known and loved him, but he always seemed so uncomfortable and turned the conversation to some other topic so quickly that I gave up mentioning him, sorry to find that the recollection of his lost and, I knew, dear friend should have such a different effect on him to what I felt, but I knew some people had a dislike to speak of the dead, and so imagined it was the case with him.

And so time passed on, and I would that I had no more to tell; but it cannot be. Lately, in looking over my papers, I found a letter yellow with age, and, looking at it, I saw it was one I received about this time, and now it is before me, and I mean to trust to its pages to tell a part of my story. I would fain forget, fraught as it is with grief for the pain I was obliged to inflict on a good, kind friend, whom I had hoped felt a brother's love for me; but, alas! it was otherwise, and I have never ceased to reproach myself for having so little thought

of the feelings of others, supposing them to be like my own. And yet I should have wronged him still more if I had answered otherwise than I did.

XXII.

“Scarborough,

“Oct. 20th, 18—.

“Two months, dear Miss Craven, have passed away since our happy meeting here, and another week will see you returned to your distant home; all this time have I been striving for courage to speak what I feel, and your answer to which may drive me from you for ever, and as every day has more and more convinced me how great is the stake for which I am trying, I have at last relinquished the attempt of pleading my cause by word of mouth, and determined to write to you instead, only begging you will hear me to the end before you decide my fate.

“Many years ago, long before we ever met, I was engaged to be married to a very young and lovely girl, who I fondly believed, if she did not love me with the intensity I did her, still cared for me more than any one on earth besides. In consequence of Laura’s extreme youth, her parents were anxious that a year should elapse before our marriage should take place, and at last, most unwillingly, I consented to the delay, and prepared to spend the time of probation with my regiment at Malta, and finally departed amidst the tears and promises of constancy of her I loved so much, and looking forward with all the hopefulness of youth to my return, never again to part from the object of my best affections. For some time my spirits were raised by frequent letters filled with regrets at my absence, and I was cheered in my banishment by the belief that it had been her girlish timidity that had sometimes prevented her showing me the affection which in truth she felt, and that she loved me as I loved her; but, by degrees, these letters

became colder, and then entirely ceased; and after waiting long and anxiously in the hope of hearing from her, I started for England, and on my landing was stunned by the intelligence that Laura had grown tired of her absent lover, and had only a few days before become the willing bride of a rich old man, whose only attraction seemed to be in his great wealth.

“ The news proved too true, and this disappointment not only embittered many succeeding years, but imbued me with the belief that all women were the same, faithless and insincere as she had proved; and bidding adieu to my native country, I returned to my regiment, a changed, sarcastic man, with no belief in happiness in this world. And when first I became the friend of Walter Annesley, and heard him speak of you I listened with pity (I am now ashamed to confess) to what I deemed infatuation, such as mine had been, and used to warn him of the rude awakening to sober earnest I was continually expecting he would receive; and harken with a sceptical smile

to what I imagined was the highly-coloured opinion of a lover, when he dilated on the noble unselfishness of your character; and not until I saw the bitter grief you suffered at his death, did I believe in the depth of that affection which seemed bound up in every fibre of your existence—how, for the sake of others, you so bravely struggled with the grief which had cast a shadow on all your future life, and nearly robbed you of a beauty once so great.

“And day by day, as I lingered at Leigh Court, did I learn still more the value of that seared and broken heart, and prize those pale and faded features more than all the bright looks of the young and happy, till even Walter’s estimation of you was not warm enough to please me, and I used earnestly to long that even a small part of the love that was lavished upon the dead might one day be my share; till at last, unable any longer to see you and not try my fate, I told your sweet sister, Mrs. Leigh, my troubles, and besought her advice and help. And kindly she answered

me, but, alas! not to bid me hope, for she told me she feared my chance of success was very small, believing as she did that you could never love again; but seeing I could not, nay, would not, give up all hope, she cautioned me against speaking to you then, and advised my going away till time should have healed the wounds by which you were then cast down, and trust to meeting at some future day.

“Isabella! dearest ‘Blackie,’ as your sister called you, that day is come at last. Think not that I sue for love such as you bestowed on Walter Annesley, for that, I fear me, can never be; but if you will tell me that you give me your regard, I shall be satisfied, knowing that word from *you* means more than many high-flown sentiments from others, and for your sake I will school myself to hear you talk of him who is gone, without the pang of jealousy I feel now. And you will have the consolation of thinking you have made my life one of happiness and bliss, which before has been so dreary. If you decide against me, I

must love you still, and shall seek in other lands the peace I cannot find in my own; but think, dearest Isabella, pray think and decide not rashly to crush every spark of hope in my heart.

“Yours, let your answer be what it will,

“JAMES HOWARD.”

Ah, Rose, dear sister! you alone of all my friends understood my feelings enough to be sure all earthly love, such as Captain Howard asked for, had long ago been buried in my soldier's grave, and without that love I would never wed.

I told my aunt, Mrs. Widdrington, of this unexpected letter, not from any doubt of what my answer should be, but she had done much to supply a mother's place to me, and I felt she had a right to my confidence. Earnestly did the kind old lady entreat of me to alter my determination, for much as it would have distressed her to part with me, she thought of the time when she, too, would have left me, and

tenderly did she point out how desolate my condition must be then.

But nothing could make me change my mind, for I felt that I was right; we have been told not to do evil that good may come, and would it not have been evil to have broken my promise, long ago given to Walter, never to marry any one but him, without even having the excuse of caring for the individual? And could I, as the wife of another, feel that I had any longer the right to breathe the daily prayer which for so many years had been my consolation, for it would then have become my duty to cease to think of him as I had done?

Even setting aside my own objections, I cannot imagine such a marriage being a happy one, for it would not be natural that a husband would be content to see me (as I ever must have been) cherishing the memory of the loved one of my youth with greater affection than I bestowed on him, when even as a suitor he could not bear the mention of Walter's name.

And so, as kindly but decidedly as I

could, I told him it must not be, and how grieved I was at having caused sorrow to one I had almost regarded as a brother; and begged, as a last request, that I might not have the distress of feeling I had robbed a mother of her son, and that he would not leave her. So we parted, never to meet again, and I returned, cast down and out of spirits, to Heath; but I had the consolation of knowing my petition had been accepted, and Mrs. Howard had her son with her until her death, which occurred a few years afterwards; after which he returned again to India, and came back no more.

But I did not easily get over my distress at this circumstance; I had hoped the retired life I led, and the time of youth and beauty having fled, that everybody would have understood that I was already enrolled amongst the band of despised spinsters termed "old maids." But I had been mistaken, and to guard against any similar circumstance occurring (though most likely I need not have troubled

myself), I at last hit on a plan by which my intentions would become known to the world in general, and for the future—don't laugh, gentle reader!—dropped the more juvenile appellation of Miss before my name, and styled myself Mrs. Isabella Craven.

XXIII.

By degrees, the unpleasant reminiscences of our visit to Scarborough passed away, and in the quietness and retirement of Heath I was very comfortable, more and more wrapped up in my niece and her little friend, as each succeeding year made them become more companionable; and it was with real regret that I found the time had at last come when I must resign my post as instructress into other and abler hands. This was a circumstance which I

had for some time foreseen could not be far distant, and I had delayed it as long as possible, from the great dislike I felt to the necessity of an intruder in our happy home and fireside, who might not be what I could wish, for well did I know the difficulty of finding a truly conscientious, good governess, who would not object to seclusion so great as ours, and it was not possible for me to make it otherwise even if I had wished it, owing to the advancing years and infirmities of my kind aunt. And I did not find my difficulty less than I had expected, and even when I had at last hoped I had secured a lady likely, from the excellent recommendations I had received in her behalf, to be everything I required, I found her ignorant, ill-tempered, and frivolous to the greatest degree, and a person utterly unfit to be entrusted with the formation of a child's character and morals.

And here I must digress from my story for a short time, to censure and declaim against the habit frequently resorted to by many kind and *otherwise* well-thinking

people; namely, that of giving false characters to the undeserving. In some, it arises from a dislike to proclaim the faults of others, and thus deprive them of their occupation; and the deception may perhaps be excused, when it relates to a housemaid, &c., but scarcely when it is the lady you recommend to an anxious parent as the instructress of her children. Even oftener is this fault committed, to save themselves the trouble of answering constant letters, but surely this should not be, and if, in many cases, the harm that they had occasioned became known, it is to be hoped a change would be effected, and women be more sincere, and make it a point of conscience to answer truthfully the questions addressed to them. I will allow it is extremely troublesome to answer the many needless and absurd questions which are sometimes asked; but would it not be much easier and better to say—"This person I have, or have not, a high opinion of?" And in nine cases out of ten this answer would prove sufficient.

The reader must not imagine, from this long tirade, that I am speaking from bitter experience in my own case; although, from what I afterwards learnt of the character and proceedings of Miss Fisher, I believe all the evils I had known and deplored in others, might have come to pass with my own charges, if I had not fortunately been very watchful, and soon discovered she was not the kind of person I should like to have the care of Isabella and Pauline, and that she was doing her best to destroy all the good that I had laboured to instil.

Of course she had not been long in the house, before she became aware of the dependant position poor Pauline held; and with all the meanness of a little mind, took a pleasure in making her aware of it, and lighting a flame of jealousy in the mind of the usually amiable little girl by the constant slights she was putting upon her, whilst on the other hand she did her best by spoiling and gross flattery to ingratiate herself with Isabella, and blind her to the

fact that she was utterly incapable of advancing them in their studies. She even tried the same plan with me, supposing it must win my heart to lavish praises on my *niece*, whilst every misdemeanour was laid at the door of the humble friend; till even Isabella herself (who, to confess the truth, had at first been pleased to be made so much of, and had begun to plume herself and look down on Pauline in consequence of the ill-judged encomiums passed on her acquirements) began to be ashamed of such unmerited laudits, and a little to see through her manoeuvres.

But enough has been said about this disagreeable woman, who was truly a snake in the grass, and did not long disturb the peace of happy Heath; and my next choice was a very fortunate one, falling as it did on a truly excellent, trustworthy person, a thorough lady in her manners and ideas; and if she was perhaps a little strict and severe in her requirements, they were always tempered with justice and the most perfect equality to both girls; and if a few

words of praise did pass her lips, they were justly proud, knowing Miss Power would never have given it if it had not been well merited.

And things were in this prosperous state, when I was surprised and overjoyed by the return to England of my sister Rose. This event, so long hoped for, till hope seemed at an end, came most unexpectedly at last, owing to my brother-in-law's resignation of his post in the West Indies, and appointment to another Embassy—this time in Europe.

Charles, who, by the death of his father, Lord Leigh, had now succeeded to the title, had always preferred a foreign to an English life, and during his stay in Jamaica had been much pleased with the employment he had there; and as her sojourn abroad seemed to agree with, and not be disagreeable to, Rose, he determined to continue in the diplomatic service. And if I sometimes used to think Rose would have liked a residence in England best, and sighed for her quiet, happy home at Leigh,

they were only thoughts, for Rose was far too good a wife to oppose what she knew her husband was so wrapped up in, and for which his talents so ably fitted him to excel in, and her regrets were not even told to me.

Rose's appearance was much altered by the time she had spent in a hot climate; her greatest beauty had formerly existed in her delicate and brilliant complexion, and her slight, elegant figure, and both these had entirely fled; but she was still a fine, pleasant-looking woman, and carried her years far better than me, her younger sister.

Two months were all she had to spend in England, before she accompanied Charles to Spain, and we determined to make the most of it. I was so pleased to be able to restore Isabella to her mother, so improved from the little delicate being she remembered her, and to watch the delight she felt in their reunion, when instead of finding herself forgotten and unloved by the child she had so long been separated from, thanks to the constant and affectionate

letters she had been in the habit of receiving, and my endeavours to retain a pleasant memory of her mother in my niece's mind, there was no reserve to be overcome between them, and they were very happy.

I confess I used to feel very sad when my thoughts carried me forward to the end of the few short weeks of my sister's stay, when I was not only again to lose her from whom I had so long been parted, but also the darling child, for whom I felt a mother's rather than an aunt's interest and affection. But I knew it could not be otherwise, and would not, if I could, usurp Rose's rightful place with Isabella; and though my pillow used sometimes to be wet with tears, when I anticipated how lonely I should be, I determined not to cast a gloom over the little time that was left by melancholy thoughts, and learn to make the best of what I was aware I must look forward to, being the usual fate of an old maid.

XXIV.

QUICKLY did the days fly past in my happiness in once more being with my dearly beloved sister, and in her long absence many things had happened that we now talked over together. Bitterly did my affectionate Rose, whose heart still clung to the father she had once so dearly loved, mourn over the circumstances which, of course, prevented her visiting Homen; and unable to make up her mind after so long an absence not to see him once again, she wrote a few lines, begging her father to meet her at the nearest town, that she might bid him farewell ere she left England for an indefinite period. And anxiously did she await a reply to her letter, which, after a delay of some days, she then received, but not, alas! from him to whom she had addressed it; the answer was from Mrs. Craven, telling her "that she was commissioned to do this by her husband, who regretted his inability to accede to her

request, and as he was just then expecting company, he was not able to have the pleasure of asking her to Homeden." And with this ended her last hope of again seeing her father, for it was evident to us both that that letter had been no dictation of his, but that having put himself thoroughly into the power of his present associates, they were determined not to risk the chance of a change from his meeting with his favourite daughter, and that most likely he had never received her note. And truly it was melancholy to think that he, poor, wretched old man! might even now be bitterly repenting his sins, which were of such a nature as to render it impossible for us, his children, to come to his assistance, and lead him to better things.

At length it was necessary for Rose to repair to London, where Charles Leigh had been for some time engaged in making preparations for their departure, and Rose, Isabella, and I departed, making Leigh Court a half-way house on our journey; we stayed there a few days, and lovingly did

my sister linger, visiting many a spot in the pretty surrounding country, endeared to her not only from its own beauty, however great that might be, but from the recollection of her visit to it when a happy bride. Yes, Leigh! you were fondly thought of; and though Rose used constantly to declare that any place was a home to her where she could live surrounded by her husband and children, still I am sure that often in the splendid mansions of an ambassador, she looked back with regret to her early English home.

But every one, let the world go straight with them as it will, must have some cares, and certainly she had not many.

At length her farewells were said, and we started on our journey, and arrived in London late in the evening of the succeeding day, thankful to have at last reached our journey's end, as the whole of the time since our departure from Leigh Court we had been made anxious by the evident indisposition of Isabella, and the next day we found, as we had begun to fear, that she was

sickening for the measles, which she had probably caught in some of her visits with her mother in the village, and owing to a slight cold taken during her journey, the rash did not come properly out, and for a few days she was very seriously ill with inflammation on her chest; but at last she slowly began to recover, and then it was that poor Rose was told by the physicians that she must again part from her child, for that, in her present weak state, a hot climate would be her death, as even when in health it was so ill suited to her constitution.

And in a short time, for further delay was impossible, the sorrowing parents bid adieu to both their children, but consoled themselves with arranging that Charley should always spend his Midsummer and Christmas holidays with them, and binding me with a promise, that when Isabella's health was quite re-established, I should, if it was possible for me to manage it, take her for a visit to them.

And they then departed on their journey,

and Isabella and I wended our steps again to Heath, and the little girl's grief at being left behind was almost overthrown by the wild delight of Pauline at seeing her dear friend come back again. And we soon fell into our old habits, and talked of, and wrote to the dear ones far away; and the girls amused themselves with many gay anticipations of the trip abroad that was *some time* to come off, though *when* it was difficult to say, as my aunt's extreme old age made me dislike the idea of leaving her, except for such a distance as admitted of a speedy recall.

One morning I received a letter from the doctor who had for many years attended us when we lived at Homeden, and consequently was well acquainted with our family history, telling me that my father had for some time been very ill, and that he had lately heard alarmingly so, but that Mrs. Craven so carefully guarded against any of his former acquaintances ever seeing him, that he could not vouch for the truth of it; but that if I was anxious to hear the

real state of the case, he would take an opportunity of calling when Mrs. Craven should have gone out for her daily drive, and let me know the result.

I instantly wrote to thank the kind Doctor for his proposition, accept with gratefulness his offer, and beg that as little delay as possible might occur before he paid his visit. And my wishes were attended to, the plan succeeded, and Doctor Graves was admitted to my father's room, where his worst fears were verified; he was confined to his bed, and evidently at death's door, but recognized and welcomed him with much emotion, told him he knew he was very near his end, and was most anxious to see me before his death, but that his wife would never allow him to write to me, and now he was unable; and he earnestly besought the Doctor to lose no time in sending for me. He was too weak to add more, and Doctor Graves took his departure, promising soon to return and bring me with him.

I lost no time in obeying the summons,

and Doctor Graves met me at the last stage of my journey to accompany me to Homeden, and hasten, by every means in his power, my mode of travelling, as he heard that my father the evening before had become much worse; and with four good horses put to the carriage did we rush forward, hoping to reach in time for me, at least, to receive my father's dying words. Quickly did trees and fields fly by in quick succession, till at last the approach to the house was gained; a kind of unearthly stillness seemed to pervade the place; no merry voices in the distance, singing at their work—all, everything was still. And it scarcely required the closed windows and melancholy shake of the head from the servant who answered Doctor Graves's summons, to know that all our haste had been in vain, and that death reigned in that dismal house.

I requested that I might for a few minutes be allowed to gaze on the features of one who, though he had not been a kind parent to me, was still my father, and this

was not a moment to indulge in bitter thoughts. But all admission into the house was forbidden by her who was now its mistress, and the doors of Homeden were shut against us. So I mournfully retraced my way to Heath, and not long after the remains of my poor father had been committed to the grave, did the reason appear for the care that had been manifested to prevent any of us seeing him in his last illness. My mother's fortune, which had been but small, was equally divided between Rose and myself, and the whole of his own fortune, with Homeden and the large landed property pertaining to it, was, without reserve of any kind, left to its present inhabitants for ever. Hugh's name was never mentioned in his father's will.

And so, without a word, was the rich inheritance that had been his birthright taken from him and given to another. Many things combined to make me of opinion that a short time before his death my father had some intention of doing tardy justice to his son, for a few weeks previous

to Doctor Graves's visit, his lawyer had received a hasty note requesting his immediate attendance at Homeden, but on his arrival there Mrs. Craven informed him that her husband was too ill to see him, and never rested till he left the house. Then, again, his desire to see me, might not that have something to do with the same subject? and bitterly did I regret my being too late. It was not the money I cared for, but that Homeden, that dear old place, should now belong to strangers—and such strangers! Then the wish, that I had never felt before, came into my mind, to be the possessor of great wealth, sufficient to buy back my dear old home, and restore it to its rightful owner; but that, alas! was impossible, for, besides having no riches to spend in such a manner, my brother's retreat was still undiscovered, and I was beginning to fear we might have lost him for ever.

XXV.

EVER since her illness, Isabella had continued to grow most surprisingly, and she and Pauline had almost lost the name of children. Every year their dissimilarity in appearance, disposition, &c., seemed to become more visible, but their affection for each other was ever on the increase. Isabella was tall and slight, and her beauty of a commanding character, whilst Pauline remained very little, and though not pretty, she still had the same degree of fascination about her, that she had possessed when a child.

In their accomplishments the same difference appeared. Isabella was gifted with a magnificent voice, full and clear, and sounding best when heard in a large room; and Pauline, with a much inferior one, almost equally charmed her listeners by the spirit and pathos with which she sang the lively little songs of her own country. One had the stately bearing of a queen, the other a

gentle grace that was perhaps more universally admired.

Already did I begin to think of the time, not far distant, when my niece would have completed her education, and turn in my head what was to be the future destination of Pauline, for the little girl had not lived so long an inmate of our quiet home, without having found her way to a good sized share of my affections, and I loathed the idea, that having lived so long in comfort and luxury, she should be turned into the cold world, to provide a scanty living for herself. But no plan occurred to my mind, by which this could be obviated, for my fortune was too small to admit of my offering her a home with me, and it was becoming evident that Heath would soon be so no longer, as my dear aunt was slowly and painlessly sinking to rest.

Many times had I heard from my sister Rose, telling me how impatient she was to see me and her child again, and begging me no longer to delay joining them; but the state of my aunt's health of course pre-

vented my doing so, for it would have been base ingratitude indeed, to have forsaken her in her weakness, who had sheltered me in my need. And it was my chief employment to render the last days of the kind old lady's life as cheerful and pleasant as I could, and in this, I think, I succeeded; she enjoyed a ripe old age, was sensible and happy to the end; and when she breathed her last, it was so calmly and peacefully, that it more resembled falling asleep. May my last end be like her's, so content, so ready to go!

XXVI.

WE had taken our last look on the beloved features of my dear old aunt, and followed her remains to their peaceful grave. The few relations we had invited to the funeral would soon take their departure, and we be alone in the home I felt we soon must

leave; and I retired to my apartment, to try and decide what my next step should be, now that I was again thrown on the world, that I might make some necessary arrangements with the people now assembled in the house, as to the period I might occupy Heath, &c.

I was now fast falling into the decline of life, but from having always lived dependent on another's bounty, I had little knowledge of how I was to contrive to live on the three thousand pounds left to me by my father, and the best plan that occurred to me was, as soon as possible, to dismiss Miss Power, and start with the girls abroad, travelling through France in order to leave Pauline with her parents, and then going forward with Isabella to Spain, where I would pay my dear sister a visit of a few months, and then return to England alone, seeking some quiet cottage by the sea-shore, in which to spend the remainder of my life.

I had just arrived at this conclusion, and was feeling very sad at the break-up that

was soon to take place in the house I had so long looked upon as a home, when there was a tap at my door, followed by a request that I would immediately come down stairs, and on my doing so, was summoned into the library, "in order," they said, "to be present at the reading of Mrs. Widdrington's will."

Now, I had never supposed that my aunt would have any will to make, for with the exception of six thousand pounds, like my mother, she had no other fortune, and the whole of her large income was derived from her late husband's property, and I had always supposed it to be her's only for her life. But she had married a man much older than herself, with scarcely any relations of his own, and to my surprise I now learnt that everything had been at her own disposal, and with the exception of liberal pensions to her old servants, and a few trifling bequests to distant relatives, that she had left me sole heiress to all her wealth.

I could scarcely believe it possible, when

the friends assembled congratulated me on my accession to such a splendid fortune, or that it was not a dream that I, the poor, forsaken old maid, was now a rich and powerful heiress; and then I first thought, that the wealth not long ago I had been sighing for, was mine, and I should perhaps be able to repurchase my brother's patrimony. Then, and not till then, did I estimate at its real value the kindness of my dear old aunt's bequest, and I returned to my room, to offer up with tears of joy, my thanks to that kind Providence that had always watched over me, and when I seemed most forsaken by the world, to be all the nearer to succour and protect me.

This change in my fortunes made a great difference in my future arrangements; and for the proper settlement of my aunt's affairs, and the taking upon myself the cares of heiress-ship, all idea of leaving England for the present was necessarily abandoned, and we remained at Heath, where I gradually became accustomed to my altered position, and formed plans by

which to benefit others by my good fortune.

There may be some who will say my riches came too late to be any pleasure to me, but with these I disagree. Believe me, reader, the means of doing good can never come too late to those who are willing to employ those means, and in so doing, they will derive a greater and far sweeter happiness for themselves, than any fleeting and selfish amusement could occasion, for the one will soon be past and forgotten, while the other is a lasting comfort.

I waited patiently until my dear aunt's few debts and bequests were paid off, and I was put into the receipt of my income (which took a much longer time, owing to the technicalities of law, than I had imagined possible), and I then instructed my lawyer to immediately ascertain if, at whatever sacrifice of money, the purchase of Homeden could be effected, and desired that no means should be left untried, or offer, however exorbitant it might be, refused,

that I could in any way raise money sufficient to meet.

For some time I feared all my efforts would have been unavailing, as its possessors no sooner became aware of my wish, than they set so high a value on what they had formerly cared so little for, that I feared even my ample fortune would prove insufficient for my wishes, when, tempted by the enormous price I consented to pay, my offer was accepted, and Homeden Hall became my own.

My crippled purse was soon well filled again by a successful sale of Heath, at more than its original value; and my next business was to set on foot vigorous inquiries for my brother Hugh, no means I determined should be left untried, and I even sent messengers to India to seek for traces of the long-lost one.

Before Homeden could become my residence, it would have to undergo a thorough repair, and every trace of its late inhabitants be swept away; and during the time these changes were going on, I determined

to pay my long promised visit to my sister Rose, and we accordingly began to prepare for our travels. Miss Power with many regrets was parted with, for both the girls were now old enough to require no governess, as a visit abroad was all that was wanted to complete their education. Pauline's prospects in life had undergone a considerable alteration; I had no intention now of parting with her except for a short visit to her parents, during the time Isabella and I were staying with Rose, and before I left England, I caused a deed of gift to be drawn up, by which I made over to her the original three thousand pounds of my own fortune, payable at her marriage, or coming of age; and having thus made my mind easy by providing for my little friend, we started on our journey.

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XXVII.

It was in the first beautiful days of early spring when we began our journey, and much was it enjoyed by all the party, travelling as we did in my own carriage, posting easily along, and stopping here and there at any place that took our fancy, or deserved particular notice, and not rushing wildly along, as many of the tourists of the present day appear to do, caring little really for the many beauties that seem to spring up at every step you take, but hastily looking at a few set sights, like a peep-show at a fair, which sometimes happen to be the things least worth seeing; but what matters that to them? they have been abroad, so many miles from home, and that is all they care for.

I had never been out of England before; it was with the greatest interest I looked around me at the beautiful and varied scenery, and the picturesque dresses of the peasantry. It certainly is a pity the lower

classes in England cannot be prevailed upon to continue to wear the red cloaks and skimming dish hats of their grandmothers, which were so much more to be admired both for becomingness and usefulness to the present dress. I often think it is in this particular more than any other that England falls so far behind other countries in pictorial beauty; for, surely, in many parts of this country there are to be found scenes abounding in beauty fit to compete with that of many parts of the continent. But the dirty straw bonnets, or black caps filled with artificial flowers, the ill-made print dress and scanty shawl of a cottager's wife here, certainly will not bear a comparison with the attire of the same class of people abroad.

I am not going to enter into a description of all we did and saw, for so many travels have been written that I could find nothing fresh to relate, but content myself with saying how we at last reached the pretty village in the south of France, where Monsieur and Madame Mon-Pesant now

resided, and we all spent a very pleasant week with this light-hearted couple, who, though they had lost nearly everything they possessed in the world, and for many years had been obliged to live in banishment, from their constant intrigues against the Government, and were even then ready to risk the small remainder of their fortune in the same foolish manner, were as merry and thoughtless as ever, living only for the present hour, and determined to do their best to make it as agreeable as possible.

Monsieur especially used frequently to try Isabella's and my gravity to the utmost by his outrageous compliments and dancing-master airs. And even Pauline looked aghast when, at a fête given by them in honour of our visit, we soon saw Madame figuring away, the gayest of the dancers. I almost regretted leaving Pauline with them, for she had so long resided in England, and away from her parents, that she had almost lost her foreign manners and feelings, and I could see anticipated no great pleasure from her sojourn with them. . But I felt I

had no right to encourage such feelings in their child, especially when they were so truly delighted to see her, and so I left her with them, and determined to be guided by the contents of her letters, by which I could tell if she were happy or not, as to the length of time that should elapse before I again came to claim her.

Isabella and I now crossed the Pyrenees, and from thence into Spain. Spain! the very name is fraught with interest; and most likely this country is the least changed from what it was at the time of the great Napoleon than any other country in Europe, so wild and lawless yet are its untamed people. Banditti still infest the roads, and bravos, with their gleaming stiletos, the towns; the very sense of danger and difficulty with which we travelled enhanced the excitement, and the further we proceeded the more was I interested in recognizing sketches and scenes described to me long ago; and often did I long to linger in some curious old town or rugged moun-

tain pass showing a peep of the rich and glowing scenery beyond.

But Spain is not a country to admit of such easy travelling, and we were hurried quickly along, with the carriage surrounded by the wildest-looking guard eyes ever beheld, and it required some strength of mind to trust oneself to their escort; but neither my young companion, whose heart was burning with impatience to join her parents, nor I were much troubled with fears, though I confess to having sometimes regretted having set out on such an exploit; but after a long and tiring journey, and a few frights, we at last arrived safely at Madrid, where we were received with heartfelt joy by Rose and her husband; their pleasure at seeing Isabella again was extreme, and many encomiums were passed on our courage at having attempted so long and perilous an enterprise.

I had not long recovered from my fatigue when I was persuaded by Rose and Charles to enter a little into Spanish society; they, necessarily, were obliged to

devote a great deal of time to visiting, and as I wished to be as much as possible with my sister during my stay in Madrid, I consented to do so. With this part of my visit I cannot say I was particularly charmed: owing to my only speaking French, and being totally ignorant of Spanish, I necessarily lost much that was going on in conversation. The women are lively and particularly beautiful; their graceful mantillas (which take the place of our bonnets) are wonderfully bewitching, with a pair of bright dark eyes flashing coquettishly from above them.

But the Spanish grandees, though certainly handsome, I thought particularly disagreeable, from their insufferable pride, and stiff unbending manners; and then their barbarous and uncivilized amusements disgusted me especially; even the women will sit quietly at a bull-fight to see a fellow-creature fearfully mangled, and, perhaps, killed.

It was with the greatest pleasure that I at last relinquished my intercourse with

this uncongenial people to accompany Rose and her husband with Isabella on a tour in search of the picturesque, in some of the most beautiful parts of the country. Then did I visit many a spot full of deep and sorrowful interest, as being the fields of some of our fiercest engagements, and I gazed on many a lonely mound beneath which lay buried the remains of brave and noble English soldiers, resting here, far away from their kindred and friends. Then, again, I beheld the ruins of some Moorish castle or fortress, and amongst these the glorious Alhambra, which I first saw in the full blaze of the evening sun, with black-eyed gitanas, dressed in all the gaudiness of their favourite colours, basking lazily in the shade afforded by those beautiful ruins. Truly, it was a scene meant for a painter's eye, and never did I long so much for the art of committing what was before me to paper.

But my time for thus loitering about was nearly expired, for I was anxious to reach France again before the winter, which I

determined to spend at Pau, and then in the following spring to return to England. It was arranged that Isabella should again accompany me, as, for many reasons, it was deemed best that it should be so, the foremost of which was that her health invariably suffered from a residence abroad, and also Madrid was not a place in which Rose wished to introduce her daughter, and she was now nearly eighteen: this could not be much longer delayed; and I took upon me the task of doing so on my return to England.

We were accompanied quite to the frontiers by my sister and her husband, and a pleasant journey it was, travelling, as we did, through some parts of the country where the vintage was going on, and many a busy crowd of peasants did we pass through who were congregated together gathering the magnificent clusters of purple grapes that were hanging in such profusion.

At last our parting could be no longer postponed; the last word was said, the last

kiss given, and Rose and her husband returned to Madrid, and Isabella and I pursued our journey. We were first to call for Pauline at her father's home, and then proceed to Pau, which had been selected from its vicinity to Monsieur Mon-Pesant's house, that they might have the opportunity of occasionally seeing their daughter during the winter, for, from the happy and contented letters I had received from Pauline, she evidently had become quite accustomed to the habits and amusements of her relatives, and had enjoyed her summer amongst them extremely. She wrote with great enthusiasm of her delight at the happy return home of her only brother, whom she had not seen for many years, and, if we were to believe her account, he was the handsomest, most agreeable, and amiable creature in the world, and I was very curious to see him and judge for myself.

XXVIII.

It was a quiet evening, when, after a hard day's journey, we drew near Monsieur Mon-Pesant's château, and the postillion dismounted to ease his jaded steeds, and urge them to struggle up the steep ascent before we gained the village; and after many "*sacres*," pulls, whips, &c., we reached the top of the hill, and then stopped to allow the man to mount again.

During the short delay Isabella and I were busily employed in looking out for a sight of any of our friends, for our arrival was to be a surprise to them, and we were enjoying the idea of their astonishment when we should enter, and were just drawing in our heads again, when I caught sight of a young couple sitting beneath the chesnut trees and eagerly watching our conveyance; the girl I immediately knew to be Pauline, and on my calling her by name, she sprang forward with a cry of joyful recognition, and rushed into my ex-

tended arms. Dear Pauline! how glad she was to see us, and I was not a whit less glad to meet with her; but, first greetings over, I turned to Pauline, and said,—

“Now you must introduce us to your brother,” for such I took the young man to be, who now stood at a short distance waiting for his little companion to rejoin him.

“Hélas! Madame, he is gone again;” and then with the crimson blush mantling on her downcast face, she added, “and that is only Jerome St. Pierre, my cousin.”

“But, still, introduce him,” I said; and as I looked on the handsome face of the young man and listened to his pleasant voice, chatting gaily in a few minutes to the girls, I thought, “a very dangerous companion, too, my little friend.”

I dismissed the carriage, and we all walked together the short distance to the château, where we were received with many exclamations of delight and astonishment by the hospitable couple. And a pleasant evening we passed, telling each

other the different manner in which the months of our separation had been spent, and I could not help casting furtive glances from Pauline (who still looked a little conscious) to Jerome St. Pierre, the young man she told me was *only* her cousin, and my experience made me suspect to be something far dearer than her answer would imply.

The next day we took possession of a house in Pau, which, thanks to the kind attention of Monsieur Mon-Pesant, was ready prepared to receive me, and we bade adieu to our kind friends, mutually pleased that we should still be near enough to admit of constant intercourse subsisting between us.

And after we had time to become thoroughly established in our new abode, few days were allowed to pass without our seeing something of either Monsieur Mon-Pesant, Madame, or cousin Jerome, and my early suspicions were every day more and more confirmed as to the nature of the affection subsisting between him and Pau-

line. I used frequently to weigh in my mind the propriety of speaking to her parents on the subject, as it scarcely seemed right to allow such frequent meetings on the part of the young people without consulting them if such an attachment was desirable, for from what I saw of the character of Monsieur and Madame Mon-Pesant, I could very well imagine their allowing such a thing to go on without ever noticing or finding it out till affairs came to a crisis.

But I put off mentioning the subject for the present, as I was very anxious to have opportunities of judging for myself, as to the character and disposition of Monsieur St. Pierre, that I might know whether to advocate his cause or not. If he turned out what could be desired for the husband of my little favourite, I determined that no help that I could give should be withheld, but I must first be sure that such assistance would be wise, and likely to ensure their permanent happiness.

For the present, things were allowed to take their course, and Isabella and Pauline

made many excursions on mules into the surrounding country with Monsieur Mon-Pesant and Monsieur Jerome for their cavaliers. The more I saw of the young man, the more was I troubled as to the advisability of favouring his suit; in many things, he seemed all that could be desired — amiable, clever, and much attached to his little cousin, but there was one great drawback which I must now explain.

I have already remarked on the active part Pauline's parents had formerly taken, and were still ready to take, in the many disturbances of their unhappy country; and great as was their penchant for getting into such scrapes, it was small in comparison to the evident longing of the young man to embroil himself in some wild scheme to bring back the old royal family to the throne of France, instead of Philip Egalité, who was now their recognized sovereign.

And tremblingly did I think of the pitiable fate of my little girl, if in future days her husband's intrigues should be dis-

covered, and he pay the penalty of his interference by a long imprisonment, even if he escaped the dreadful guillotine. Pauline too had evidently become inspired by his frequent conversations on the subject of bringing back what he looked upon to be the true king, and unseating the usurper, declaring he was ready to shed every drop of his blood in the cause, till she looked upon him as a hero, and the appointed saviour of his country. In vain was it for me to attempt to bring her back again to sober sense, and see what all these political intrigues had done for her father, for if, for a short time, I made her think more sensibly, her next meeting with Jerome upset all the good I had done, and she used, poor child, to confide to Isabella and me her belief that great changes were at hand, and that a fresh king would ere long reign in France, who would restore to them all the property and honours they had lost.

I soon found that an understanding subsisted between our lovers, and on speaking to Monsieur and Madame Mon-Pesant on

the subject, I found I had been greatly mistaken in supposing they had been unobservant of the growing attachment between their daughter and her cousin, which they had seen with great delight, and now confirmed by their highest approval. Under these circumstances it would have been vain for me to have raised any objections, even if I had been sufficiently decided, in my dislike to the match, to think of doing so; as it was, I only felt anxious and more doubtful than any one else, of the future happiness of the young couple, whose marriage it was now settled should take place before I left Pau for England.

And so already I was to lose one of my charges! And it set me thinking how soon I might be left quite alone, when the one I had least expected to go, was taking flight, and I felt how badly I should get on, with no young people in whom to interest myself.

By my next letters from England, I learned that my hitherto unsuccessful endeavours to find Hugh seemed likely at

last to prove more fortunate, and that some clue had been obtained as to his present abode. My informant concluded his letter by urging my speedy return to England, where he was awaiting fresh instructions as to continuing the search.

In this state of affairs, I was impatient to set forward on my journey with as little delay as possible; but consented at the particular request of Pauline and her parents, in which the young man's voice was added, to remain a short time longer, in order to be present at their wedding; which in consequence was fixed for a rather earlier period than had formerly been intended. I gave myself the satisfaction of presenting the little bride with a trousseau in which the useful and ornamental was, I flattered myself, happily combined, and this, with the three thousand pounds I had, previously to my leaving Heath, arranged to give her, would I hoped make them a nice addition to their incomes, and give them every chance of being happy and comfortable, if only Jerome would be content not to indulge in

any of his patriotic schemes. But that *if* sadly troubled me.

It was a pretty sight that rural wedding! Garlands of flowers arranged tastefully in festoons the whole way from the house to the little Protestant church, the graceful bride in her pretty simple dress, and her veil fastened on her head by branches of natural orange blossoms. Isabella officiated as bridesmaid on the occasion, and for a time she seemed to catch the infection of so many smiling, happy faces, and enjoy the animated scene. When the time of parting came, many tears were shed, and I was obliged to hurry Pauline, now Madame St. Pierre, away from her old school-fellow, for fear she should cast a shadow over her happy face by dwelling too much on their separation. I took her to her young and handsome husband, and with a fervent blessing on them both, and the hope of ere long welcoming them on a visit to me in England, saw them start on their journey.

I then returned to my Isabella, and we tried to comfort each other for the loss of

our little pet, but we succeeded but badly, as each confessed to feeling a fear that Pauline had chosen a rough and perilous path in life.

XXIX.

Now that Pauline was gone, there was nothing left to tempt us to linger any longer at Pau, and accordingly a very few more days found Isabella and me hastening on our way to England, where we arrived in safety, without any adventures.

I had not been long in London before I heard all the tidings that had been discovered about Hugh, and though the news amounted to less than I had sanguinely anticipated, still there certainly seemed a far greater chance of finding him, than I had hitherto had. The intelligence I received was this—the messenger I had despatched to India had found that Hugh,

after for some time residing quite amongst the hills, not far from the Himalaya mountains, when he first left the army, at length deserted India altogether, and, it was supposed, started to settle in Canada. And the people I employed, following up the slight clue thus afforded them, after a few disappointments in finding they had been wandering astray from the right course, had now discovered that a person, bearing his name, had about that time purchased a tract of country in the wildest and most distant part of Canada, and soon afterwards had gone to settle there with his wife and family, and since then had only come by himself to Montreal for short visits, with an interval of many months intervening between each, to make the necessary purchases, and dispose of the skins of the wild animals he had killed, whose fur was valuable.

Such, then, was the almost hermit's life my brother had been leading; and as I thought on the ardent temperament and companionable qualities of the boy, I pitied

him for the dreariness he must feel in being so shut out from communion with his fellow men, and pleased myself with thinking I was to be the happy means of restoring him to his rightful home. I lost no time in once more despatching a messenger, who was to cross the mighty Atlantic, and find his way to the distant abode poor Hugh had found, the bearer of letters from me, begging him to lose no time in returning to his native country, never again to leave the sister who was longing to see her long-lost brother.

The passage to Canada, now so expeditious, was then a much slower process, and I knew I must make up my mind to some months elapsing before I heard of the success of my mission, and therefore determined to go immediately to Homeden, and there superintend any preparations I might wish to make, for the arrival of its master, before I returned to London, for the purpose of introducing my niece into society. To Homeden then we accordingly went, and it did my heart good to see the honest

pleasure of the simple villagers at my return to live amongst them; and their joy was redoubled, when I told them I was in hopes that "Poor Master Hugh," as he was still called by the few old people who remembered his sad departure, was coming back ere long to dwell in his ancient home.

The dear old place was much improved since the time when I first introduced it to my readers; for the trees with which my grandfather had replanted the park, and which then looked too young for the place, had grown up into fine timber, and the house having just undergone a thorough repair, everything looked to my satisfaction.

Happily did the time pass to me, who was so glad to have returned to my beloved Homeden, and it was with sincere regret that I again left it, to mix in the gaities of the London season, which was far from being congenial to my present tastes; but I recollected the time when such things possessed the charm they had now lost, and my promise to Rose, and wish to give

every pleasure in my power to Isabella (who was looking forward with great delight to the time of her débüt), overruled all my objections.

We arrived in town, and a few days after, our presentation at Court took place, and we were soon engaged in the amusements of the gay world. I experienced much satisfaction in meeting with many of my former friends, who, from the secluded life I had led for many years, had long been lost sight of; amongst whom was the family of Sir Frederick Annesley, who was a brother of my Walter's. My meeting with them was quite accidental, and was brought about at a ball, by my being much struck by a strong resemblance to him who was gone, in a young man, who a few minutes after was introduced to Isabella, by the name of "Mr. Walter Annesley." How my old heart thrilled when I heard it, and as soon as she returned from her dance, I claimed acquaintance with him, as being an old friend of his father's. And the next day I was much

gratified by a visit from Sir Frederick and his wife; and from that time frequent meetings took place between us.

And now I must confess to being much disappointed to find my beautiful niece, of whom I was not a little proud, did not appear to excite the admiration I considered her due; she was troubled with extreme shyness, which in such a tall, and stately beauty often passed for hauteur. The quiet life she had always led, associating only with her near relations, had quite unfitted her for the small talk of a London ball room, and she had already obtained the cognomen of the "dumb bell," when a change suddenly came over her, which soon made her the gayest of the gay, and those who had only lately gazed on her statue-like beauty unmoved, were struck with admiration when they saw those lovely features beaming with animated expression. And now for the cause of this wonderful transformation, which shall form the subject of my next chapter.

XXX.

THE season was at its height, when I was persuaded by the Annesleys to join their party to Ascot Races, and as Isabella seemed pleased with the project, I at once consented, for it vexed me sadly to see the dear child's bright anticipations so far from realized, for I saw clearly she was not enjoying herself, and was anxious, by every means in my power, to atone for the disappointment.

It was a bright June morning, and the drive from London to the course was most enjoyable, and when we arrived on the gay scene, the excitement and eager faces of the bystanders who were busy watching the races, the beautiful horses, each straining every nerve to win, seemed even then to enliven my fair niece more than usual; but the change was not yet effected, and I observed her watching silently the lively scene without answering anything

but monosyllables to the merry sallies of those around.

Luncheon time came, and while I was conducted by Sir Frederick Annesley, instead of, as I had hoped, seeing Isabella follow me with Walter, she was taken possession of by another of our party, a Captain Clements, to whom, though he was handsome, but in a gay *blasé* style, and appeared agreeable, I had already taken a great prejudice. There was to me a degree of impertinence in his assured manner, and it irritated me extremely to see the marked attentions and bold gaze of admiration with which he regarded Isabella; they were near me during luncheon, and the little I heard of their conversation seemed principally on his side, and as he rattled on what appeared a great deal of unmeaning trash, I consoled myself with thinking she was probably as tired as I could wish her to be of him. Notwithstanding this, they were together nearly the whole of the remainder of the day; and when at night we were alone in the drawing-room talking

over the events of the day, Isabella spoke with great delight of the pleasant excursion she had had, and mentioned Captain Clements as "such an agreeable person." I did not tell her of the dislike I had taken to him, for I always had an objection to doing so without sufficient cause, and I should have been very sorry to have cast a damp over her pleasure.

But the next day I was more seriously annoyed with Isabella than I can ever remember to have been before, for in the course of the morning a large packet of kid gloves arrived, directed to "Miss Leigh," and she told me they were in payment of bets she had won at Ascot of Captain Clements. At first nothing would satisfy me but their being instantly returned, but the tears and protestations of Isabella that her error had been committed through thoughtlessness, and that she had seen many young ladies doing the same thing, which had blinded her to the impropriety, made me at last relent, on her giving her faithful promise never to do so again, and I

explained that it appeared to me to be at any time much too "fast" a proceeding, but that it was infinitely worse from her slight acquaintance with Captain Clements.

And so the matter was dropped, for I feared by my perhaps over-strict notions to destroy the new-found liveliness of Isabella, and prevent her confiding everything she did to me in future. But I could not help my manner being as frigid and distant as possible when Captain Clements called that afternoon, and on something on the subject of my niece's "luck" of the previous day being talked about, I gravely mentioned my disapproval of such customs, and he very soon pretended to be convinced by the few remarks I made that the habit was an objectionable one, and so, by his persevering civility on every occasion of our meeting, which was now of frequent occurrence, contrived to arrive at a degree of intimacy with us that was far from being pleasing to me

Still it was Captain Clements who, night after night, took my niece and myself to

supper, called my carriage, put on our cloaks, and then conducted us to it; Captain Clements, who was constantly to be found lounging at the back of my opera-box, engaged in eager discourse with Isabella, to the exclusion of every one else.

And if I spoke to her upon the subject, and insisted on greater distance of manner for the future, she showed plainly that she had been tutored, and was acting a part against her will, and that was worse than anything; feeling, as I did, that my objections, though they were strong ones, were not justified by knowing anything I could positively allege against him, though I had heard him spoken of as a "fast man" by people who knew him well. Yet the only answer that I could get to my inquiries was, that he was, "perhaps, a little too free with his money, but a capital fellow;" and this, though very different from the praise I should wish to hear bestowed on one possessing an interest in Isabella's heart, might still sooner be called commendation than the contrary, and as the time

was near at hand when we were to return to Homeden, I determined to say no more, but content myself with extreme watchfulness when he was present, and do my best to let that be as seldom as possible, and trust to time and circumstances to work a change in Isabella's liking for him.

And yet I could not help it annoying me extremely, when, as was now frequently the case, I heard their names coupled together, and was asked if an engagement did not exist between them. But time flew on, and at length I had the satisfaction of departing for Homeden without a declaration of Captain Clements' sentiments taking place, which I feared must then have occurred. But he contented himself with looks and sighs, and talking of their next meeting; and though for a short time Isabella's spirits sadly drooped, she was comforted by thinking of his last words, and trusted it would not be so very long before she saw him again.

And much did I pity my poor child in her simple trustfulness, for I was of opinion

we had seen the last of her admirer, for he bore the character of being a fortune hunter, and certainly, in this case, his admiration seemed disinterested, for though Isabella was to have a tolerable fortune, it was nothing to cause a person of that description to think it worth his while to look after, and therefore I could only suppose he had amused himself with drawing out the shy, cold-mannered, but beautiful girl, whom every one else had striven in vain to thaw, and that now the season was over, and she gone away, he would look out for some worthier prey. And pitying her, as I sincerely did, I could not wish it otherwise, for my observation and natural instinct alike revolted at the idea of such a cold, worldly-minded man wedding that innocent young girl, and earnestly did I trust she would forget him.

We did not stay long at Homeden, but started for the Lakes, where we had arranged to meet the Annesleys, for I thought change of scene and society afforded the best chance of Isabella's getting

over her attachment. There was still no news of Hugh, but it was but early days yet to expect to hear, and I tried to await patiently the success of my mission.

We had not been long on the banks of Windermere before we were joined by Sir Frederick and Lady Annesley, with their son and daughter, and then I used to drive with Lady Annesley, and Sir Frederick with the young people took long excursions for the purpose of sketching in the neighbourhood; we generally used to make an appointment to meet them at some resting-place, and make it the object of our drives to take the luncheon to them, and we used to partake of it together, then separate and meet again at a substantial tea late in the evening; and when they returned earlier, we used to walk down to the shore of the lake, and enjoy a row on its calm waters in the cool of evening, and sometimes Isabella used to sing, accompanied by Miss Annesley on the guitar, and beautifully sweet did the rich full tones of

her magnificent voice sound in the perfect quiet.

And then it was that I became convinced of what I had suspected in London, that she was loved by Walter Annesley. Isabella shone much more in the easy familiarity of a country life, for then the shyness I have remarked on never appeared, and her lively conversation and diversity of talent made her the life and soul of the party. And the slight impression her beauty had made before, had evidently ripened into a more serious feeling in the unconstrained intercourse of their present life, and it was with a face beaming with love almost amounting to adoration that young man used to regard her, when in our little boat upon the lake she used to burst into a melody of song, which died away in soft cadence on the rippling waters.

So here I was again to behold a courtship going on, and knew not if I should let things take their course or not; and I settled to do the first, for when I looked at Isabella's happy face, from which every

cloud had vanished, I could not help hoping that the devoted attachment of the young man to her, the first love of his honest heart, might have destroyed the remembrance of the hollow compliments and systematic attentions of Captain Clements. Every day, as I became better acquainted with Walter Annesley, did I seem to find fresh and stronger proofs of similarity in character and disposition, as well as appearance, to the loved one of my youth, and it cannot be wondered that I, who knew so well the constancy and goodness of that noble heart, should be anxious that my niece should return the affection of one so like him, and who appeared so calculated in every way to make her happy. And I deemed I was serving the interests of both young people better by silence than perhaps premature interference, and heartily wishing Walter success, I watched the progress of the affair.

At length the long-expected news from Canada arrived, and I had the happiness of knowing my brother Hugh still lived, and

that I might with greater certainty look forward to, at no very distant period, seeing him again. I had only received a short note informing me of this, as my messenger had but just arrived in England, and was now to be found in London, and to London, then, I determined to go, that I might hear from his own lips every particular of his meeting with dear Hugh, and when I might expect his arrival. There were so many things I longed to know: if he had married the "Lucy" he had mentioned in one of the few letters we had received from him; what had been the cause of his abandoning the profession that he had formerly so delighted in; how he became possessed of capital sufficient to purchase his Canadian home; and last, but not least, if he talked of and remembered us, as we thought of him.

All this I was burning to hear, and instead of staying the short time longer at the Lakes we had intended doing, it was arranged that Isabella and I should start the next morning for the great metropolis,

and whilst I retired to my apartment to make arrangements for our somewhat sudden journey, Isabella and her young companions wandered out to bid adieu to the pretty scenes of their rambles. For a few minutes it struck me that, perhaps, that evening Walter might try his fate, and I wondered what her answer would be; but then, again, I thought he would more likely delay the momentous question till their next meeting, which was to be soon, as I had asked the whole party to visit me at Homeden after Hugh's arrival there.

And busied with thinking about him, and the many minor considerations relating to our start on the morrow, the subject did not occur to my mind again until it was time for our usual tea, and I descended to the dining-room, where Sir Frederick, Lady Annesley, and I waited till long after our accustomed hour for the return of the young people, and were just going to sit down to it without them, when the two girls entered the room unaccompanied by Walter, and there was a crimson flush on Isabella's

cheek, and an air of constraint about her answers as to the cause of their unusually late walk, that convinced me the *denouément* had taken place, and I waited anxiously for some sign by which I should be able to judge if she had looked favourably on his suit.

At last Sir Frederick asked the question, which I had wished yet dreaded to make, why Walter had not returned with them; and his sister answered, by saying, Walter had got a headache and was still out of doors, and had bid her say, they need not keep any tea for him, as he should not require any more that night.

And then I knew full well the blow he had received, and deeply did I feel for poor Walter's grief! and yet it was a case where I dared not interfere, for how much should I have had to answer for, if, in my strong predilection in the young man's favour, I should unwittingly persuade my niece to marry without the affection, lacking which marriage cannot be happy, and it would be far better and happier for her to be ever as

her aunt. But I could not help regretting that she had refused the true affection of Walter for one so, in every way, his inferior as Captain Clements; and a gloomy evening was this our last in Cumberland, for Lady Annesley and her daughter evidently were as convinced of the state of affairs as I was, and their hearts were heavy thinking of his bitter disappointment, and a constraint had fallen upon our formerly merry party, which made us all thankful when it was time to retire for the night.

In the solitude of my own chamber did Isabella inform me of what had taken place, and as she told her story, it became so evident to me that she truly had no love to give, that it reconciled me to the justice of her decision. In the morning at our hurried breakfast, all the party appeared but Walter, and he never came to bid us good-by before we went; but as I looked back ere a turn of the road hid the house from my sight, I saw him gazing wistfully after the carriage which was bearing her

away, but when he saw he was observed he turned hastily away, and so ended our visit to the Lakes.

XXXI.

AND now my readers must accompany us to London, where I was soon engaged in listening to the account of my long-lost brother. My informant spoke of his distant home being very comfortable, and even possessed of a degree of wild beauty. My brother seemed strong and well, and Mrs. Craven was a gentle, quiet-looking woman, evidently quite wrapped up in her husband and three little girls.

To my surprise and mortification, I found that Hugh had evinced little or no interest about his relations in England, and even that at first he had been much disinclined to come home, even for a *visit*, as he expressly declared it would be, and that it was only at the united persuasions of his

wife and my messenger, that he consented to do so, leaving Mrs. Craven and his children by themselves in their wild home. So I was not to see the sister-in-law whose acquaintance I had so looked forward to making, but I comforted myself with hoping when my brother had really come, and saw how fondly he had been remembered by us, that his affection would come back, and I should soon be able to prevail upon him to either send for, or fetch his wife and little girls, and abandon all idea of again living in Canada. And I determined no effort on my part should be wanting to prove to him the sincerity of my affection.

During our short stay in London, we saw Captain Clements frequently, and to my surprise, he was as *impressé* as ever in his manner to Isabella, who was overjoyed to see him again, and I was much concerned that he should so plainly see how devoted to him, and him alone, she was, but I was powerless to prevent it; and when we returned to Homeden, I found they had made some fixed arrangement of where they were

to meet again, which was to be at some county balls that were to take place in the early part of the winter.

Now I felt was the time to make my last remonstrance, for soon it would be too late; and I took care especially to tell her again (for I had always made a point of informing her, when I first heard them) all the reports I had heard to his disadvantage, and also the particular dislike I always had felt to him, and ended by saying that I was not so selfish and unreasonable as to think of expecting her to give up Captain Clements on that account, but that I did most earnestly beg of her to study well the real character of the man, and give herself a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with him than she had hitherto possessed, before she gave the almost irrevocable promise; and assured her, that if after her balls, that she was looking forward to so much, she should still like him as she did then, I would persuade her uncle Hugh, who I expected would then have arrived, to ask him to Homeden. And though I could see

she set down nearly all I said to prejudice and old maidish fancies, I think I did a little good, for it occasioned a greater degree of confidence between us, and she promised to try and do as I wished.

But, alas! I knew too well the effect of a few silvery words from Captain Clements to feel much dependance on her promise, and began seriously to consider what answer I must give; for Charles and Rose's would only be an echo of mine, as they had told me they should leave all such affairs in my hands, on account of their own inability of watching over the interests of their child, or judging of the merits of her suitors, from their long and continued residence in foreign lands. And the only plan I could think of, as being the wisest and best, was to settle to reiterate much of what I had then been saying to Captain Clements, when my consent should be requested, and try if possible to prevent a decided engagement, so as to enable her to see more of him before it was too late to draw back.

I was now expecting my brother's arrival in England every day, and set about making preparations for the proper rejoicings to be given on his coming back to Homeden.

And at length I received a short and hurried note from Hugh, announcing his arrival at Liverpool, and intention of proceeding to Homeden the afternoon of the following day, "on a visit" to me. As I looked at that letter so coldly worded, and without one expression, however slight, of pleasure at our reunion, I could not help fearing he must be sadly changed, but I tried to shake off my disappointment by supposing it had been written in a hurry, and that he was reserving all expression of his gladness till we met. And as the time drew nearer, and I knew I soon should see him, my spirits returned, and with pleased excitement I looked on all my preparations to do him honour. There were the long tables laid out in tents in the park, where all the village were to dine, the crowds of people, with a goodly troop of

mounted tenants, ready to ride out and meet their master.

At last the carriage appeared in sight, and all the bells from our church burst forth in such a merry peal as almost shook the little old tower, and Isabella and I were standing in the house porch to witness his arrival, when we saw the farmers ride up and stop the carriage, and the eager villagers were beginning to unharness the horses preparatory to dragging the long-lost one to his home in triumph, but a voice from inside made them instantly stop, and the disappointed people falling back, the horses trotted at a brisk pace to the door, and coolly and quietly getting out, I saw a tall, thin, bald-headed old man before me, who shook hands, and in a grave impressive voice, asked me how I did, and then turned round to be introduced to Isabella. And this was my brother Hugh, and my long looked-forward-to meeting with him! And making a silent inclination of his head to the crowd of people who were waiting impatiently to hear him speak to them, he

walked into the house. I conducted Hugh to the library, thinking that there at least old recollections would be roused within him, and he would be more like his former self; and as he came into the room, I saw his eye wander to the chair where my mother had always sat, and fancied a gleam of satisfaction did seem to flit across his face, when he saw it standing in its accustomed place. But when I looked again the smile had vanished, and he was as cold as ever; and he began a kind of forced conversation composed of questions and answers, which on his part were short and unwilling, as if he was talking with some one who could have no interest in what he had to tell.

At last I began to think he must be labouring under the idea that the many years of silence had been wilful on our part, and that but feeble attempts had been made to find him. And this I felt to be so unjust, that I hastened to explain the difficulty we had had in former days in writing to him, and that when that difficulty was

at an end, another had sprung up in the mournful death of the friend who had corresponded and told us of him, and we having then lost all clue to his whereabouts, had unwillingly been obliged to give up any hope of resuming the broken intercourse. And this he readily seemed to understand, and said it had been much the same thing with him.

Then I asked about his wife, and found she was his old love Miss Russel. In his grave way, he spoke affectionately of her, and said she had been a good and faithful wife to him, and I discovered that it was on account of her health suffering from the excessive heat of the station where he had been quartered, that had been the cause of his leaving the army and going to the hills; and that after they had lived there in great poverty, on the meagre savings he had made before his marriage, she had unexpectedly come into a small fortune through the death of a distant relative, which they agreed to spend in the purchase of a settlement in some healthier climate.

Canada was fixed upon, and he had found the place that he desired, and they had lived there ever since happy in themselves and their three children. It was soon dinner time, and instead of the happy social meal I had looked forward to, we sat down to a dull formal repast, and I was so cast down at the sad difference I found between expectation and its fulfilment, that my conversation did little to increase the liveliness of the party.

At last dinner was concluded and the servants left the room, and in a few minutes Isabella (who I knew saw and felt for my disappointment, though it was a subject I could not speak of to her) got up and retired also, and Hugh and I were left together. How strange it seemed to be conscious of a feeling of reserve and almost fear stealing over me, as I sat with my brother, on the first evening after seeing him again. But I could scarcely realise to myself that that stern looking old man, who sat drinking his wine opposite to me, listening with but little appearance of in-

terest to my tales of what had befallen each of us since our separation, had once been the gay, laughter-loving, and affectionate boy I remembered still so well. Oh! what a noble warm heart had been crushed by adversity, and torn from the relations between whom an affection once so great had existed; and when by his own exertions, and the force of circumstances, he was no longer poor and friendless, and once more restored to those who loved him, the cruel fiend, joined to the hand of time, had rooted out all warm feelings from his breast, and he was grown cold, selfish, and obstinate.

At last I touched the right chord, and saw the one redeeming point that time had left untarnished. When I spoke to him of our mother, there was no lack of interest then, and he revered the memory of the dead with the same sincerity with which he had loved her when living. And when I told him of her peaceful death, and the manner in which, till the last spark of life was gone, she had still thought of him, his composure

was at an end, and bitter tears coursed down the strong man's furrowed cheek, whilst he exclaimed with heartfelt earnestness, "Oh, that she were living still!" and unable any more to restrain his emotions, and wishing to be alone, he left me, and I saw him in the gray light of that autumn night, when there were no irreverent eyes to see, go forth alone to gaze upon his mother's grave.

XXXII.

THE next day I had another interview with my brother at his own request, in which he thanked me as warmly as he seemed capable of doing, for my wish to return to him the home of his fathers, -but he said Homeden was valueless in his eyes, it had no pleasing recollections for him, he could only think of the days of his boyhood, where for the want of a natural commiseration for his

youthful predilections, and a drawing too tight of the reins of parental authority, he had broken through them, and was turned out, to earn his own bread, with toil and suffering, far away from all his friends. He thought, too, of his mother's joyless life and premature death, and remembered that in after years it had sheltered those who had probably been the cause of all these misfortunes. In Canada no thoughts such as these came to trouble him. It was the home purchased by Lucy's money, to be a happy resting-place, after all their toil and privations. It had been principally formed by his own hands, and every year he had watched it growing into fresh beauty, as he made a greater clearance round it, and laid out the garden, which was Lucy's and the children's pride. And with them, happy and content thus to dwell, far from the haunts of men, he had found a home for himself, which he loved far too greatly to desert.

Vain were all my remonstrances; he would, he said, stay a short time with me,

and then go back; and when I pleaded for his wife and children's sake, he answered that the latter could feel no disappointment in not coming to the country they had never seen or heard spoken of except with dislike by him. And he fancied he knew his wife well enough to be sure she would not regret it; but if it would be any consolation to me, she should be written to on the subject, and his final decision should rest on the reply she returned. And, I somewhat comforted by the slight hope thus afforded me, consented that it should be so.

Now that the first shock of my surprise was over, I speedily became accustomed to Hugh's grave undemonstrative manner, and after he had been with me a short time, I fancied it became a little warmer, and that he liked my companionship. He was very busy in superintending the erection of a magnificent marble monument to the memory of his mother, to contain which a small chapel on one side of the chancel of our church had to be built. The monument consisted of a white marble figure of

herself (copied from a bust, and a full-length picture by Sir Thomas Lawrence, which we possessed), and depicted her arising from her couch, as if after sleep. The sculptor had been particularly successful, and had given a sweet unearthly expression to the upturned face, which I remembered well to have seen that evening when she sank to repose.

And now I must leave Hugh occupied in the manner I have described, and relate how the gaieties Isabella was so interested in, went off, and the results that arose from them. It was the evening in which the annual ball at our county town was to take place, and I had filled Homeden with guests for the occasion, glad to make the house useful now Hugh was with me, to assist in doing the honours; he had resisted all the persuasions of Isabella to accompany us, and was to remain at home alone.

We dined rather earlier than usual, that the young ladies might have sufficient time afterwards for that important subject, the toilet, on which Isabella at least expended

much more time and consideration on than she was accustomed; and well did I think she had succeeded, when she returned to the drawing-room to await the arrival of the carriages.

She was perhaps more splendidly attired than is generally becoming to one unmarried and so young; for her uncle Hugh had presented her with the greater part of her grandmother's diamonds (which, as they came from her own family, she had been able to leave to him); he had first offered them to me, and I had declined them with the exception of one or two favourite old brooches, which were perhaps the least valuable in the collection, and told him he should keep them for his wife, at which he smiled and asked, What use she could find for them in the backwoods of Canada? and added, that if she should surprise him so much as to wish to live in England, he should then be well enough off to buy such things for her. So, seeing they were valueless to me, he gave them to his niece, and at his particular request

she wore some of them that evening, and well did her white *crêpe* dress, and the jewels sparkling in her glossy hair, set off her queenly beauty.

And I gazed sadly on the flush of pleased excitement on her cheek, and compared her to the pretty, but rather insignificant, young ladies, who, in their pink roses and white muslin, were somewhat enviously regarding the beautiful presents Isabella had received, and wishing they, too, were possessed of such an uncle; and truly did I feel she would be without a rival, that night at least, and that ere morning came very probably she would be the plighted wife of as worthless an individual as she could well have found.

The drive was a very silent one, for Isabella and I were alone together, and we were each busy in anticipating the events of the evening; and it was not until we were already rattling over the paved streets and nearing the place of destination, that I in a few words tried to bring all I had said on a former occasion to her

remembrance, and then waited patiently to see the issue.

At last our party was mustered in the cloak-room, and we proceeded to the ball-room, and the first person who met my eye was Captain Clements, who was engaged in dancing a quadrille; he instantly saw us, and his partner had but little of his attention again, as he was busy observing our movements; and no sooner had the figure been finished than he conducted her to her *chapêrone*, and then came and shook hands with us, expressing his great pleasure in meeting us again, and claiming Isabella's promise (given when they last met) to dance the first valse with him; she, with her countenance beaming with delight at seeing him, took his preferred arm, and they were soon amongst the dancers.

Little more did I see of her that evening, for she was the undisputed belle of the ball, and was soon engaged for every dance, and too many times to please me to Captain Clements. When supper time

came, she refused to go with one of the gentlemen of our party, asserting that she was already engaged for it, and the instant after she was led triumphantly away by her admirer. I waited quietly till she came back, determined they should not have the excuse of not being able to find me, to indulge in a lengthened *tête-à-tête*; and though I fancied a shade of disappointment was visible on both their faces when they saw me, *he* at least was far too polite to show it, and they both sat down by me; and for a short time Isabella managed to escape going away, by pleading fatigue when her partners came to claim her.

Certainly Captain Clements understood the art of making himself agreeable, and that night he did his best. He told me he was staying with the officers who were stationed now in the town, and were a part of his former Regiment; and without expressing it in actual words he so cleverly allowed it to be seen that it was the hope alone of meeting with the Homeden party,

that had been the cause of his paying them this visit, that I saw every minute he was adding to the mischief he had already done.

At length a dance was struck up for which Isabella was engaged to him, and they together left me; and when they came back, our party were consulting if it was not time to order their carriages, and Captain Clements withdrew to a short distance to speak to one of his friends, the officers. They had not been long talking, when they were joined by another of the same party, who exclaimed in what was intended to be a low voice, but perhaps sounds more at a distance than any other—“Well, old fellow, I congratulate you on your luck with the heiress, you’ll soon be able to pay up now.” The peremptory “hush!” from Captain Clements, and his nervous examination of our countenances, instantly convinced me for whom it was meant. So he thought Isabella was my heiress! and the idea once put into my head,

I wondered I could be so stupid as not to have thought of it before.

But I had not time for any more reflections, for during the interval in a quadrille we had to cross the room, and Isabella followed me leaning on Captain Clements's arm, who, as formerly, put on her cloak, and they stood talking together till my carriage came, when he conducted us to it and said "good night." With an exclamation of pleasure, Isabella sank back, intending no doubt to enjoy the same quiet commune with her own thoughts, as she did in coming. But not a moment did I lose before I began to tell her of the conversation I had overheard, thinking the palpableness of its meaning must convince her as to the species of devotion he evinced towards her.

But I soon saw my mistake, and for a few minutes anger, such as I had never witnessed in her since she was a little child, was the only sentiment my story called forth; but she soon recovered her self-control, and set about trying to convince

me of the injustice of which I was guilty, and so clever a pleader did she show herself, that even I was staggered for an instant, at the different constructions that might be put on the words I had heard. First she doubted that they were ever addressed to Captain Clements, but were most likely intended for his companion; then she suggested the name "heiress" might, with great probability, be applied to a race-horse, and we were both aware he had many; and then, last of all, she declared that even if the remarks were admitted to bear the interpretation I had put upon them, it was no reason for us to suppose that he had anything to do with what the young man had said; and as the officers were only lately come to the town, it was possible that they might imagine that she did stand in that position at Homeden of which they had spoken, of which Captain Clements, who knew her better, would take no notice.

In arguments and fruitless warnings such as these our drive home was spent,

and Isabella in sullen displeasure immediately retired to her apartment, leaving me to await our friends, who were returning more leisurely than we did, and plead extreme fatigue as an excuse for my niece not remaining for the supper which was ready in the dining-room. Thankful was I when the last good-night had been spoken, and I was alone in my own room; and most sincerely did I wish that my party was to break up the next day; but we were all engaged the following evening for a dance and *tableaux* at the house of a neighbouring friend, and I knew that in all probability Isabella would there again meet with her admirer.

Every remonstrance or objection that I raised to Captain Clements, I saw only added fresh fuel to the flame, by causing Isabella to clothe in fresh (imaginary) virtues, him who she looked upon as her injured and traduced lover; and she longed to show her confidence in his affection and disbelief of all the stories she had heard, to his disadvantage, by becoming his affianced

wife. She even gloried in his straitened circumstances, as she might prove the strength of her attachment, which would make poverty no discomfort.

Such were my thoughts that night; till at last wearied with my unusual dissipation, and many fears for the future, I fell asleep.

XXXIII.

THE day passed heavily away, and both my niece and I were glad when it at length drew to a close, and we were once more on our way to scenes of gaiety; for to the former the unusual constraint she had to practise in talking to and amusing our guests, in her present state of excitement, was especially irksome.

Isabella and I, as usual, were alone during our drive, and most unsociable companions we proved. The place of our

destination was situated at a distance of some miles from Homeden, and most of our journey thither was accomplished without a word passing between us. Isabella had not recovered her usual serenity of temper, and I was still vexed at finding how little my frequent warnings were attended to.

We had nearly reached the house, when Isabella's arms were thrown suddenly around my neck, and, in a voice broken with emotion, she entreated my forgiveness for the hasty words she had spoken the night before.

"Dearest aunty," she said, "pray forgive me, for your displeasure is the only thing that can cast a shadow over my happiness to-night, for I am sure that when you know him better you will think of him as I do."

Mine was not a heart to resist such an appeal, and I tenderly kissed away the tears from my darling's blooming cheek. Sorrowing for the infatuation she was labouring under, and wishing that it were likely I should change my opinion, as she

said, I breathed an earnest prayer that the events of that night might turn out for the best, and determined no longer to torment myself with vain and earthly cares, but trust this crisis of my niece's fate into the hands of "Him who cannot err," and patiently await the result.

Our destination was now reached, and we were conducted through many brilliantly-lighted rooms, till we reached our hostess, who uttered an exclamation of delight when our names were announced, and saying—"Here is Isabella Leigh, she will just do!" she hurried forward to meet us, and describe the great difficulty she was in, owing to some young friends who were to have filled the principal parts in her *tableaux vivans*, being at the last moment unable to come. She said she had found substitutes for most of her subjects, but that for one, at least, she could think of none of her party but Isabella who could do.

My niece gladly consented, pleased with the, to her, unusual amusement, and preferring the activity of preparation to the

somewhat tedious suspense of a looker on. And I made no objection, for the company assembled consisted, with few exceptions, of old friends who had known me all my life and felt an interest and love for Isabella for her mother's sake. I asked what character she was to personate, but could get no answer, as my friend said it was against the rules to tell beforehand, as she wished the company to guess for what each *tableau* was intended.

So Isabella was taken possession of by my friend, and I joined the company in the drawing-room, which was already darkened and one end filled with chairs and benches, tier above tier, for the convenience of the spectators. I was soon in the midst of many of my friends, amongst whom I tried to rank Captain Clements, who soon came forward to greet me, and inquire with much solicitude after Isabella, whom he evidently was much surprised to find was not with me. I told him she was to take part in some of the performances that evening, and

then turned the conversation to some less engrossing topic.

One or two *tableaux* appeared, and each bore their share of admiration and criticism, and vainly did my eyes wander in search of the lovely features of my niece. Then there was a short interval, during which the young part of the audience were employed in dancing a quadrille; they returned to their seats, and the curtain was slowly removed from the living picture. The scene from Scott's novel of the Talisman appeared, in which Edith Plantagenet has an interview with a pretended Nubian slave, who turns out to be Sir Kenneth in disguise; she sees through the deception, and has set an ornamental lamp in such a position as to reflect his profile on the side of the tent, and thus give greater certainty to her suspicions.

A murmur of applause burst from lookers on, everything was so faultless in the representation; the grace of the Nubian's attitude as he himself knelt with the Sultan's letter before the beautiful Edith, whom I

instantly knew to be Isabella, whose face so well expressed the delighted surprise of recognition.

I turned round to address Captain Clements (who some time ago had been sitting behind me) for I was curious to see how such an exhibition would please him. But he was no longer there, nor was he visible in the crowd of people beyond, and then with a sudden thought, I waited for the curtain to ascend for the last time, and recognised in the Nubian the object of my search. Then did I know too well that the truthfulness with which she represented the character of Edith, which caused such universal applause, was in fact no acting at all, but the real expression of her sentiments. I bent forward to catch a glimpse of her companion, but his figure being more in the shade, and his face much altered, at a distance at least, by the temporary change of colour, rendered me unable to observe his countenance. Yet he must surely have been for the time inspired with some feelings of a disinterested nature, when he

gazed on the beautiful young face turned towards him, and showing in every feature the love that dwelt in her heart, and perchance a fleeting wish passed through the mind of that cold, calculating man of the world, that he were worthier of such a prize.

An interval of dancing then took place, and then other *tableaux*, and during the time one of them was going on, Captain Clements's voice warned me of his vicinity; and leaning forward, he asked me with an expressive manner, which at once told me the *denouement* I had long been expecting had really taken place, what time the next day it would be most convenient for me to see him.

I answered him in as cool and collected a manner as I could assume, fixing twelve o'clock the next day, for the time for him to come to Homeden for our interview. But I could not help my thoughts wandering sadly from the scenes before me, and anticipating with much annoyance the disagreeable business I was to have to per-

form on the morrow, for I had fully made up my mind to object to a decided engagement until I should have had time to know Captain Clements better, and hear more of his real character.

Such were the subjects that were passing through my mind, when I had to try and recall my wandering senses, for an old lady, who had been a friend of mine, when we both were young, joined me, and began to say how delighted she was to see me re-established at Homeden, &c. And then with the freedom of one who had known me all my life, she began to question me on my future plans, and to ask if it were true, that I intended giving up my recent purchase to my brother. And I, who could not help thinking as I hoped, answered in the affirmative, adding, that his acceptance of it rested with his wife. She then inquired what was to become of me and my "adopted child," as she termed Isabella. I told her that I had never expected to keep her long away from her parents, and that she would then immediately join them, for I should no

longer be able to take her out. And that I should try and find a small house in some neighbouring village, so as to be near my brother and his children.

Thus far had I got in my story, when a hurried movement behind the bench on which we were seated, attracted my attention, and turning sharply round, I was just in time to catch sight of the retreating figure of Captain Clements; he had been sitting close behind me, and so no doubt had heard the whole of our conversation. Now, thought I, this will test the strength of his attachment, and I shall be able to judge, if I have been wrongly prejudiced against him or not.

The evening was now far advanced, and nothing further happened worthy of remark, except that when the time of departure came, no Captain Clements as usual was there, talking in half whispers to Isabella, and bidding us a lingering good night at the carriage door; but she instantly sought to explain this absence, by telling me he

was obliged to go away with the officers who had brought him.

We then had a long and interesting conversation, in which I told her of the catechising my old friend had given me, which her admirer had overheard; adding, that if after that he still continued to be devoted to her as ever, it would go a long way to remove my objections to him. So great was her confidence in him she loved, that not a fear of the consequences oppressed her, and she was delighted that I should have this proof of how I had misjudged him. And having promised her that I would only claim a sufficient time to make inquiries into his character which, in my place as her guardian, it was my duty to make, before I sanctioned their engagement, my child retired to her room, a strange contrast to the night before. Hope, and the joy of believing herself beloved, filled her mind, and her busy thoughts chased sleep from her bright, happy eyes.

In the morning Isabella appeared at breakfast as fresh looking as ever; the

crimson flush on her cheek occasioned by excitement, effectually concealing the fatigue which the amusements of the night and want of rest had caused,

As soon as our repast was concluded, we gladly bade adieu, to first one then another of our guests, till at last all were gone, and we were left alone to await the arrival of Captain Clements. How even, long before the appointed time, did the least sound make us start, and Isabella fly to the window which overlooked the principal drive through the park. Then, as the hands of the clock on the chimneypiece slowly drew near the hour of noon, she could no longer stay quietly there, but went out of the room, soon to return, as restless as ever, and listen to the monotonous tick, tick, which now began to tell that the time was come and gone, and still he was not here.

So the morning passed, and it was luncheon time, and she consoled herself with thinking he was prevented coming in the morning, but would be here in the afternoon. It also passed away in vain expectation,

without the appearance of Captain Clements, or even a short note, to explain the reason of his not coming. At length the dressing-bell sounded, like a knell, forbidding further hope that day, and the forced composure Isabella had preserved, as long as she still expected him, now quite broke down, and she wept as only those can weep who begin to awaken from a dream of happiness, to find how bitterly they have been deceived. Not that Isabella was yet sufficiently convinced, not to feel some hope that all might yet be well, and the cause of this delay satisfactorily explained, but certainly her confidence was shaken, and she no longer felt the truthfulness she had so lately done; and the excitement and suspense she had suffered the whole day, combined to weaken her powers of self-constraint.

It was very grievous to me, who for so many years had watched with the jealous eye of a mother the slightest cloud that rested on my darling's brow, to see her so bowed down with sorrow for which I could

offer no consolation, for it was obvious to me that we had seen the last of Captain Clements; and in spite of my sympathy for her grief, I could not help feeling thankful that the fortune-hunter had been unmasked ere it was too late.

The next morning was a repetition of the preceding one, and still Isabella clung to the vague hope that he still might come; and it was well for her that hope was soon destroyed, or her health could not long have borne the bitterness of such expectation.

In the afternoon, the sound of horses' feet outside roused us from the reverie we were both in, and shortly after a party of the officers from the neighbouring town were announced. Eagerly did poor Isabella look for their friend also. But he did not appear, and she had to sit down and listen to the drawling conversation of our visitors, in the hope of at least hearing something about him. Not a word was mentioned till they rose to take leave, when one of them turned to me and said—

“I must not forget to give Clements's

message, who had hoped to have accompanied us here, but was obliged to go to London."

I thanked him, and asked if his friend had any thoughts of returning.

"Oh, no!" he answered, and they then took their departure, and Isabella rushed to the solitude of her own room, there to meditate and weep over the cruel disappointment she had received. There I let her remain, knowing that I had nothing to say that could do any good, until she had had time to recover the rude blow she had sustained, and be able to think with thankfulness on the escape she had had, of wedding a man so totally different to what she believed him to be.

XXXIV.

MANY weeks passed away, and though for my sake Isabella had tried hard to rally her

fallen spirits, and wrestle bravely with her feelings, yet the joyous voice carolling some favourite air, the merry laughter which had even made her uncle Hugh look gay, was now but seldom heard, and even if sometimes she did resume her old habit, the careless light-heartedness, that had formerly sounded in every note, was gone, and she seemed to lack interest in any of her pursuits.

I began to fear that the companionship of one so old as me was but badly calculated to amuse and interest her at this particular time, and therefore wrote more strenuously than ever to persuade Pauline and her husband to come and see us. They had never paid their promised visit, though I had frequently reminded them of their engagement, and I was beginning to be very curious to see how that marriage was turning out. The return post brought me the news that my little friend was to start on her journey immediately, though not accompanied by her husband, who, she wrote, was unfortunate enough not to be

able to leave France at that time. I could not help wondering what the business was, which prevented Jerome accompanying his wife, yet Isabella and I were delighted to have the dear little friend all to ourselves, as in former days.

A cheery welcome did we give to our traveller, who for the pleasure of seeing us had consented to a separation from a husband she idolized, and take so long a journey by herself. Her lively conversation and gentle manners soon did much in restoring Isabella to her former spirits, by turning her thoughts from the recent unhappy events, to the merry days of childhood, when Pauline had been her only and loved companion.

Hugh was much taken with Pauline, who, in the fearless gaiety of her innocent heart, chattered away with as much freedom and unconstraint to him as to the rest of us, which Isabella and I, who had been so much chilled by his frigid manner, found it almost impossible to do. He used to listen to the cheerful conversation of the

girls with a grave smile, and often when they were singing together in an evening for our amusement, we used to sit by the fire, and he would shake his head and say,

“Ah! sister, it was a bad business when you married that dear little girl to a silly young Frenchman!” For he had an old-fashioned dislike to foreigners, excusing his liking for Pauline herself by saying that her long residence and education in England had made her more like a native of that country than her own, and he had discovered from Isabella and myself our fears of Jerome in particular.

We never could get any satisfactory account of the business that prevented his visiting England, and Pauline, though open as the day in all things relating only to herself, was extremely cautious in revealing any of her husband's affairs. This reserve, so foreign to her nature, tended to make me suspect there must be some weighty secret with which she was intrusted, which it was of importance not to tell, even to us

her old and tried friends, and whilst I feared that they might be getting into trouble, I could not help respecting the caution of the little wife.

As far as their affection for each other was concerned, there was no cause to be uncomfortable, from the evident happiness of Pauline, in whose conversation there was frequent mention of Jerome's name, and every gaiety she talked of having most enjoyed, clearly bore a brighter colouring from having been participated in by him.

He wrote to her frequently, and she used to read us portions of her letters, and look artlessly delighted when he touched on how her presence was missed in their home circle, and still worse by him in his lonely house now the active little figure of its mistress was not flitting about, shedding sunshine wherever she went. Then Pauline would come to some part of her letter which she would read and reread earnestly to herself many times; and I, who could not help watching every change in her expressive countenance, used to notice a

grave, anxious look steal over it, which, in spite of its quickly vanishing, warned me that all was not right. I also noticed that Pauline no longer talked as she used so enthusiastically to do on political reform in France, or of the changes she expected to see take place. Perhaps already she had begun to see the futility and danger of such chimeras, and wished her beloved Jerome did the same.

At length the long-expected answer to Hugh's letter, in which he left the final settlement of their plans to Mrs. Craven's decision, arrived, and, much to my surprise and mortification, went against me. She, like Hugh, was much attached to Canada and her forest home, and had no ties or recollections by which she might be tempted to a residence in England, and ended her letter by saying, that knowing, as she did, that she was only echoing her husband's sentiments, she did not scruple to decide to remain where they had settled.

I have sometimes thought that had Mrs. Craven's answer been different, my brother

would have been equally satisfied, for every day seemed to make him more domesticated with us; and now I no longer looked for any demonstration of affection, we got on very well together, and he had begun to take some interest in Homeden. But he was not a man to allow he had changed his mind, or try in any way to alter the decision by which he had arranged to be guided. He had now been absent some months from his family, whom he naturally was impatient to see again, and of course I could not expect longer to delay his return, though it made me very sad to see the preparations for his speedy departure, for I knew that I should then part for ever from the brother from whom I had so long been separated.

In an interview I had with him a few days before he sailed for Canada, he gave up for himself and his children all right or claim to the Homeden property, which I had intended leaving to his girls. For himself, he said, he had no thoughts of returning again to England, and the children

would be almost sure to cling to the adopted country where they had lived nearly all their lives, sooner than to one which they had been taught to dislike, and where even their relations were unknown to them.

Then, and not till then, did I decide to make Isabella the heiress she had been thought to be before. From the many years we had lived together she stood in the place of a daughter to me, and also I was certain she would value the dear old place as it deserved to be. She was now, though perhaps rather graver than is usual at her age, in good spirits, and quite recovered from her disappointment, which she had learnt to look upon rather with thankfulness for the lucky escape she had had, than with grief. And I was well assured that she had had a lesson which would not be forgotten, and she would not again allow herself to be so fascinated by an agreeable exterior, as to be blind to every fault, if we may not call them by a stronger name,

until she knew something of her suitor's true character.

Hugh now bid us all farewell, and showed me far more affection towards the last than I had dared to hope for; he told me he had enjoyed his visit very much, and promised to write occasionally, and remember that I was interested in all relating to him and his family. And so he went away, both of us, I think, the better and happier for having met; and though it was at first a subject of much regret that he should again leave me, I became reconciled to it, believing he was happier in the mode of life he had chosen, than anything in his former home could have made him.

The time for dear Pauline's return to France was now also come, and many urgent letters from her husband and parents, begging her no longer to delay rejoining them, prevented her, as I had hoped, prolonging her visit a short time, that she might make the principal part of her journey with us, who were intending joining my sister and her husband, who were going

to take a short tour in the north of Italy later in the spring for the benefit of Charles's health, which was slightly impaired by the little relaxation from his official duties that he allowed himself. So we bade adieu to Pauline, and softened the pain of parting by arranging to pay a visit to Monsieur and Madame St. Pierre in their own house, on our way to England, after our travels in Italy.

XXXV.

Now that we were deserted by the friends that made the Homeden fireside so cheerful, Isabella and I looked forward to our journey, finding it difficult to settle, now our party was so broken up. We were not going to make so long a stay abroad as before, as our object was not alone for the sake of travelling, but principally to meet Isabella's parents, who were not likely to

visit England for the present, and her father, especially now he was not well, wished for the companionship of his child, to cheer by her filial attentions the listless, weary hours of weakness from which he was suffering.

We were soon on our road, and hastened to Genoa, which was the appointed place of meeting, and were joined in a few days by Lord and Lady Leigh. In the first moments of meeting, the pleasurable excitement of their arrival brought a flush to Charles's face which gave it for a time the semblance of health, and blinded me to the great change that had taken place in his appearance since last I saw him; but it did not escape my notice long, and made me think how quickly time passes on, and I, too, must, ere long, begin to feel the infirmities of old age, from which hitherto I had been remarkably free, when I saw those of my own generation so afflicted by them.

When I had last seen my brother-in-law, he was, though getting into years, a strong, healthy-looking man, bearing his age well,

and looking much younger than most of his contemporaries, but now, how different! He had arrived at that time of life when the comforts of a quiet country residence, and certainly a partial, if not a total, resignation of the toil and constant thought necessary to one holding office, or in a profession, is almost imperatively required for the prolongation of health. But he had become so wedded to the foreign life he led, and high post he still so ably filled, that the idea of resigning it to live quietly in England was insupportable to him, and no persuasions could deter him from again returning to it when he had passed a short time in Italy with us.

We did not refer again to the subject, for dear Rose told us it was distressing to him, and though her soft brown eyes filled with tears when she talked of the sweet home to which she would so gladly return, I could see she entertained no hope of ever doing so except for a short flying visit. But Rose was not a person to let anything which was not a real misfortune

long distress her; she was perfectly happy in knowing that Isabella could not be more loved and cared for, even by herself, than she was by me, and she was rejoiced by seeing how entire rest of mind and body, and cheerful unrestrained intercourse with his own family conduced to reinstate her husband's strength. Isabella always looked back at this visit with especial pleasure, as she probably saw more of both her parents without the presence of strangers (which had sadly broken in and destroyed any feeling of home when we were with them at Madrid) than she had ever done since she left them a little child at Jamaica.

We travelled on slowly to Nice, which had been recommended as a residence for Charles during the cold months of spring, and it was on his daughter's arm that the invalid first ventured out, to walk with her in the vicinity of the town. By degrees their wanderings were prolonged further and further, and then they took to riding together, and so happy did he seem in her

society, that I could not help indulging a hope that she might win him from ambitious thoughts and worldly cares, and at last induce him to return with us to England and once more settle at Leigh Court.

But I soon found how fallacious such anticipations were, and that Rose was right in predicting that he would not long be content with such an uneventful life, and with returning health, a desire to return to his post would come also, for he soon began to talk of, and prepare for their departure, and grudge the short time they still had to spend at Nice. Often, when Rose and I were talking of former times, I found it difficult to believe that he was the same person who had once been so averse to trouble of any kind, that it had required all the influence of his young and much loved wife to persuade him to represent his own county in Parliament, but so it was; and now that he was an old man bowed down with many infirmities, he had imbibed such a spirit of ambition and love of power, that he could not bear to give up

the struggle in the upward path of fame, and retire into private life. His son Charlie, too, had just joined him as an attaché, and he knew that in his present position he would have many opportunities of advancing him in the diplomatic service, which would all be at an end if he now resigned, and sank in the eyes of the world into a nonentity.

So they took their departure, and Isabella and I began our journey home through France, intending to pay our promised visit to Pauline: but I received a letter from her, regretting very much her inability to receive us, as Jerome and she were in Paris, on business of the former's. Business again! What could this mysterious employment be? But it was an affair I could not interfere with, so I merely wrote a letter to my little friend, telling her how sorry we were to leave France without seeing her, or making acquaintance with the little Jerome, who had been born during the time we had been at Nice.

We then went forward to England. Isa-

bella and I had but a short time in London that year : we did not arrive there until late, and returned to Homeden at the same time as the previous year, but it was at my niece's own request that we did so.

We had not long been in London, when Captain Clements had the effrontery to leave his card, and shortly afterwards we met him at a ball. He instantly came up, and would have shaken hands with his former familiarity, but this would not do, and we were so extremely cold in our manner to him, that he shortly withdrew, and ought to have known better than to have tried his fortune again with us. But it seems he did not, for not many days after, Isabella received a letter containing a formal declaration from him, and alleging as an excuse for his former extraordinary conduct, that he had heard a report of her being engaged to some one else, which he had since learned was untrue.

But my niece's eyes were now opened, and she saw Captain Clements too plainly, in his true colours, to be deceived by such

a made-up story as that, and of her own accord, she sat down, and wrote her answer, which she brought to me for approval. It was a cold decided refusal, written in few words, in which she never touched on his former behaviour or the explanation he had given for it, and giving him no reason for her present decision, as that, she thought, was the most dignified manner to put an end to this business, and so thought I; so the letter was sent, and we never heard any more from Captain Clements.

For some time after this event, a cloud seemed to rest over Isabella's spirits, and I was almost inclined to fear, that though aware of the insincerity and worthlessness of the man, she was still attached to him; but on my questioning her upon the subject, she entirely dispelled my fears, but explained that she could not see without grief, any person whom she had once cared for, turn out so different to what she had believed him to be, and think what a fate she might have made for herself. And this, poor child! was very natural.

I may as well tell now, all we ever heard of Captain Clements. He was, at the time he offered to Isabella, deeply involved in debt, from which no doubt he hoped by one bold stroke to free himself, and once more be able, with a well-filled purse, to enjoy those pursuits which had been his ruin. How nearly he succeeded I shudder to think, and never can be sufficiently thankful that my child did not fall a victim to his fascinating manners. His character by this time was pretty well known, and after his last disappointment, his downward path was rapid. First a slur was cast upon his name, in consequence of incidents on the turf, which scarcely bore the appearance of honour or honesty. Then, some time after, he became a defaulter at some race; after which he was obliged to live abroad, as of course he could no longer appear in society as he had done, and soon he had his sentence of banishment confirmed, by being declared an outlaw; and the last I heard of him he was travelling about from one foreign

town to another, a disgraced and miserable man, living on a small income, made up for him by his relatives, and paid in small sums to guard against its being spent, as quickly as received, at the gaming table, which still remained his ruling passion. It is dreadful to think on the wreck of such a man, who in the onset of life might have been anything. Gifted with talents, a pleasant exterior, kind friends, ample means, and all to have been lost by that one terrible passion of gambling! But, alas! it is too common a fate.

XXXVI.

Now I must pass over some four or five years, in which little worth recording took place. Isabella was still with me; every summer as it came round, found us engaged in the amusements of the London season, though each time our stay became

shorter, for my niece cared little for such gaieties, now the novelty which at first pleased was gone off, and she much preferred the quietness of Homeden, where we saw the friends we really cared for, in a far more agreeable manner than during our stay in town, where everybody seems too busy to associate with whom they like.

It was a subject of much surprise to me that I had not ere now lost my Isabella, so handsome and amiable as she was, for the few failings she certainly had naturally, had been thoroughly subdued, and in my eyes she was nearly faultless. She was very much admired, and might have married more than once, but she was always so decided in her refusal, that I began to think she must be intending to follow my example, and that Homeden was fated to be again the property of a maiden lady.

Now, though selfishly I might be glad to retain the companionship of one so dear to me, I was so convinced that it is not generally a happy lot in life—for in most cases there is a total absence of any ties,

by which to keep up an interest in the world, which for yourself you no longer care—that I did not as might be supposed feel satisfaction at the prospect for Isabella, and once or twice, when she turned a deaf ear to the addresses of young men, who appeared in every way desirable, I departed so far from my general rule, as to venture to say a few words in their favour, for I feared her first disappointment might have given her a distrust in the sincerity of mankind, and she might live to repent having rejected their affection. But nothing I said was of any avail, for she assured me, she had thought this over well, but had not any liking for them ; and once I remember her saying, that she knew she had refused the only person who had really cared for her, and so must abide by the consequences.

Poor Pauline I had not heard of for a long time. About a year after her visit to me at Homeden, her husband had been convicted of being concerned in some conspiracy, and condemned to the galleys for

fifteen years. Immediately on hearing this, I wrote to her, doing my best to give her all the consolation in my power in her great distress, which I had so long feared might happen, and offering her a home with me. I never received any answer from her, but afterwards learned from Madame Mon-Pesant that she was determined to remain in France, and try if by any means she could obtain either a commutation of his sentence, or permission to join her unfortunate Jerome. Soon after, Monsieur and Madame Mon-Pesant left their château in the south of France, and I could not discover either their or Pauline's retreat.

And so things were, when I again resume my story. We had occasionally visited Rose and her husband abroad, and once or twice they had come for a short time to England. At the time I am writing about, we were in London, and they spending a short time with us, and much were we all enjoying this happy reunion. Besides the great pleasure I had always

in my dear sister's society, I was very glad of her help, in going out sometimes with Isabella, for I was fast becoming an old woman, and unable to bear fatigue as I used to do, and Rose, though rather older, was so used to a continual round of gaiety, that she did not feel it like me.

It so happened that one day, towards the end of this season, Rose and Isabella were gone together to a large *déjeûner*, given by some people of our acquaintance at a beautiful house of theirs, distant a few miles from London. As usual the evening was to be devoted to dancing, so they were not to return till late.

I had not been very well of late, so was very glad to spend the afternoon quietly at home, and after answering some letters that had long been awaiting a convenient opportunity like the present, I took a book and laid down on a sofa in the back drawing-room, where I had not long been, before the volume fell from my hands, my eyes closed, and I was in the land of dreams.

How long I had been so I know not,

when I was awakened by the entrance of the servant, and his information that a lady in deep mourning, who refused to give any name, was most desirous of seeing me. I ordered that she should be shown up-stairs immediately, and had scarcely time to arouse myself from the drowsy state I was in, before the door again opened, and she stood before me. A thick crape veil prevented my seeing her features, and though I waited some time for her to inform me her business, not a word was spoken; and though I offered her a seat, she still stood in a supplicating attitude before me, so I delayed no longer speaking to her, and said I was afraid she was suffering from some great unhappiness, and hoped that it would be in my power in some measure to alleviate it (for I was constantly being applied to, by various people in distress, and such I truly imagined my present visitor to be). But my assurance seemed to give no consolation, for tears and sobs, which seemed to come from the very heart, were the only answer I received. Was it some-

thing in the attitude and figure before me, or an inspiration that seized me, for I suddenly darted forward, and tearing the veil from my incognita's face, I recognised in the swollen eyes, and thin, careworn features, her who had once been my merry little Pauline. With a cry, in which grief and pleasure at once more seeing me were strangely mingled, she threw her poor wasted arms around my neck, and cried as if her heart would break. For some time she continued thus, but by degrees her sobs became less hysterical, and then ceased altogether; and before she told her story, I insisted on her drinking the sal volatile I had prepared, and lying down on the sofa to recover her composure. So I seated myself beside her, and as she lay with closed eyes, her hand clasped in mine, I noticed with consternation the change in her appearance since our last meeting. Her face and figure were pale and thin to attenuation, and she certainly looked full ten years older than she was. Her dress, though

still tidy, was extremely deep mourning, and very old and rusty.

I had got so far in my observations, when her eyes opened, and springing from the couch, she besought me to let her at once tell her tale, as she had little time to spare before she must go home. So seeing silence would be more distressing to her than a relation of her troubles, I requested her to begin her tale, and a melancholy one it proved. Much of it is unnecessary to tell in these pages, but I will endeavour to relate, in as few words as possible, the substance of her story.

From the period of her return from England, to the time Jerome was taken prisoner, she had lived in the most harrowing dread of the consequences that might, and did, accrue from the part her husband was taking with some other conspirators against the king and government, and finding all her persuasions to relinquish such a perilous attempt vain, she was obliged to watch Jerome gradually advancing to his own ruin, without the power to prevent him, or

the consolation of communicating her fears either to her parents or any of her friends, as her letters might fall into the hands of those for whom they were not intended, or some unlucky thoughtless speech be made, at the cost of Jerome's life. She therefore waited, and kept all her doubts and fears within her own breast.

At length her worst suspicions were realized, and she saw her beloved Jerome torn from his home, and consigned to a dismal prison, there with his accomplices to await the sentence of their offended king for their plotting against his person. For some time it was feared that he would pay the penalty of his offence by perishing on the guillotine, but on his trial, it was discovered that though deeply implicated, he had been made the tool of his associates, and had never intended or was aware of the lengths they meditated, which had purposely been kept from him, in order that he should not draw back till too late; and all the time during the arrangement of their schemes, anything which seemed likely to cause suspicion was

selected as a suitable employment for him, and hoping if anything were discovered, he only would be implicated, as they knew his high sense of honour well enough to be quite sure that not a word that could cast suspicion on any of his friends would be wrung from him.

All this by degrees Jerome learnt, and happily for him his judges also, and when sentence was passed, he found that instead of having to prepare himself to die an ignominious death, he was consigned to the galleys for fifteen years. Perhaps many of my readers will exclaim, that death itself were preferable, but let them wait till they are tried, and they will find that life is very sweet, especially to one so young and hopeful as St. Pierre, and it was only by degrees that he became aware of the misery of his lot.

But still hope lingered, and at his suggestion his faithful Pauline strained every nerve to obtain a pardon, or at any rate an amelioration of his sufferings. All her efforts were in vain, and after a weary interval,

spent in hoping against hope, that a tardy mercy might be shown, despair seized the wretched man, and he began to meditate putting a violent end to his miserable existence, when he was cheered by an idea from Pauline that they might plan some mode of escape.

This thought once having entered their heads, they never rested night or day, until they at last hit on a scheme which, after many disappointments and continual delays, at length succeeded, and Monsieur and Madame St. Pierre with their little boy, arrived one day at a small marine town on the coast of Cornwall, in a French fishing-boat, free indeed, but, alas! almost penniless, for all their fortune had been confiscated.

Pauline's first thought at this juncture of their affairs, was to apply to me, whom she knew would be ready and glad to help them; but Jerome, who remembered the many warnings I had given him, was so ashamed of the dreadful state to which he had reduced his family, that he could not

bear the idea of telling me of it, and he extracted a promise from Pauline not to do so, which was the more easily done, as it wanted but few remarks from her husband to imbue her with a foolish delicacy in applying to me, who had already done a good deal for them, and was not allied by any ties of blood or even country.

From her long residence in England, it was easy for Pauline, who acted as spokeswoman, to pass themselves off as English during their journey up to London, where they found some wretched lodgings in the neighbourhood of Leicester Square. They then resolved, that, as for the present it would be unsafe for Jerome to seek any employment until any likelihood of their being traced should have passed away and he could do so without suspicion, Pauline should try to earn a sum sufficient for them to live upon, either by taking in fancy work, or going out as a daily teacher. Only those who have tried either of these employments as a means of livelihood, can

know how hard a task it is, or how mean a pittance their greatest efforts can obtain.

In addition to all this, they had not been many months in London, before their little Jerome caught a malignant disease, which turned out to be typhus fever, and a few days found the miserable parents weeping over the lifeless form of the poor little boy, their grief aggravated to distraction, as in consequence of their extreme poverty they had been unable to give him the best advice, and their small, hot apartments in a crowded street had contributed in a great measure to accelerate the fatal increase of fever which had been his death.

Not long after, Jerome himself was attacked by the same fearful malady, though happily his stronger constitution enabled him better to battle with it, and he soon recovered from the fever, but only to find himself sinking from weakness and want of any proper support into what must have inevitably proved a decline, had not Pauline determined no longer to attend to her husband's scruples, but apply to the friend

whom she felt sure would not turn a cold ear to her tale of misery.

And be assured, reader, I did not. Pauline never returned to her wretched abode, and a few days saw her and her husband comfortably settled in a pretty little villa in the environs of London, with good attendance, and every luxury to aid in the restoration of Jerome's shattered health and their former happiness; and though the mother's heart still sorrowed for the loss of her cherished darling, I led her to think of him as a happy little angel, dying as he did when in the first bloom of youth and innocence, and look forward to the arrival of one whom we hoped would supply his place, and whose advent was not far distant.

Whilst they were awaiting this event in their pleasant retreat, Isabella and I busied ourselves in forming plans for the future for them, and we soon thought of one which seemed in every way so desirable, that I lost no time in writing to discover its feasibility. Of course any return to France

was impossible, and besides the difficulty of finding any suitable profession for Jerome in England, its vicinity to his native country was, in my opinion, a great objection, on account of his unfortunate predilection for meddling with edge tools, which I feared might return when he had had time to recover, and forget the severe lesson from which he was now suffering. So I be-thought me of Canada as an excellent place for them both—healthy, beautiful, and removed from those lands which had been the scenes of their misfortune; and I eagerly awaited my brother Hugh's answer to my letter, which I had written consulting him on the subject, and requesting him to let me know as soon as possible how he approved of my plan.

An early mail brought me his reply, which to my great delight was highly favourable. He seemed charmed at the idea of again seeing his little friend, with whose sorrows he sincerely sympathized, and he told me there was a small tract of land now to be sold adjoining his own

estate, which he thought would exactly suit them, and was to be had at a very trifling expense; adding, how delighted his wife and girls would be at having such pleasant neighbours. My mind was soon made up, and a short time after—when Isabella and I were spending a day at the villa for the christening of their baby, which was a little girl, and called Justine, after her paternal grandmother, as is the custom in France—I took the opportunity of opening my scheme to the delighted and grateful pair, who seemed equally pleased at the prospect of their fresh country, and the little home with which I presented them.

As soon as Pauline was sufficiently recovered, they intended starting on their journey, and immediately began to busy themselves with preparations for it. The time flew quickly on, till at length the days of their stay in England were nearly at an end, and they came to spend the little remaining time with me at Homeden. I could not part with Pauline without regret, for I loved her very dearly, and of course

could not look forward to ever seeing her again; but I knew that I had done my best to make them happy, and they fully appreciated it, and looked forward with thankful pleasure to the peaceful home I had secured for them in the far off country for which they were bound. So they bade me adieu, and started on their voyage.

We shall never meet again in this life's journey, but I have the consolation of frequently hearing of their prosperity and happiness, and of knowing that my name is remembered with almost filial love by the settlers. They had not been many years in their new home, when they were joined by Monsieur and Madame Mon-Peasant, who could not bear to be separated from their child; and since then they have continued to live peaceably together.

XXXVII.

FOR some time after the St. Pierres' departure, no circumstance occurred to break the monotony of our lives at Homeden. My sister was again abroad, whilst Isabella still remained with me.

At last we were roused from our retirement by a pressing invitation from Lady Annesley, begging us to come and spend Christmas with them at their country seat. In spite of the unfortunate affair with Walter and Isabella, a degree of intimacy continued to subsist between us and the rest of the family, and as time wore on, the slight restraint, which in spite of both our efforts could not be got over at first, passed off, and we were nearly on the same terms as we had been before, except with Walter, whom we had only met occasionally in London since our parting at the lakes, and on such occasions, which were most strictly avoided and only happened by chance, the sole communication he held with us was a

distant bow. He was now away from England with his regiment, which was on foreign service.

Miss Annesley was almost Isabella's only young lady friend, and she well deserved to be so, for she was a particularly amiable, warm-hearted girl. The growth of their attachment for each other was somewhat peculiar, for the intimacy had been first sought by Miss Annesley on her brother's account, knowing how deeply he was attached to Isabella, and she naturally wished to gain an interest in the heart of her whom she hoped and expected one day to welcome as a sister. When that hope was over, and she saw her dearly loved brother plunged in the bitterest disappointment, in the first burst of her sympathy for his grief, she somewhat unjustly took a dislike to Isabella as the cause of it, and accused her of having trifled with his feelings, by encouraging his attentions, solely for the pleasure and poor triumph of refusing him.

Now this was very far from being the case, for the poor girl was too much en-

grossed in thinking about Captain Clements to notice, as she otherwise must have done, Walter's growing attachment. This Miss Annesley afterwards discovered, and when she could acquit her of any intentional unkindness to her brother, her rancorous feelings soon subsided, and Isabella's real worth and many fascinations of person and manner, gradually but surely found their way to her affections, and no one regretted the infatuation that prevented her for so long, seeing through the character of Captain Clements, or more sincerely rejoiced when she was so providentially acquainted with it. Perhaps, too, the doting sister might have divined a secret which I had long ago discovered, viz., that Isabella now looked back with bitter but unavailing regret to the true, honest-hearted affection, which when once offered to her she so lightly refused, but which she now rated at its true value.

Be this as it may, the two girls now loved each other dearly, and were never happier than when together; and the days

flew pleasantly by until Christmas eve, which was a fine, smiling, frosty day, and so warm in the sun as to more resemble the days of early spring, than the weather we naturally look for at this season of the year. The greater part of the day was spent by Isabella and Mary Annesley in first gathering and then decking the village church with evergreens, amongst which the red berries of the holly were judiciously mixed, in honour of the coming blessed day which spreads joy over all the earth. Their handiworks were certainly very effective, and drew forth encomiums from all the party who were summoned to give their opinion, when the work was finished.

And now it was evening, and we were all sitting round the fire, listening to the crackling of the huge log of wood which had just been added to the already burning mass. Though very happy, we were certainly a very silent party, each engaged with our own thoughts, us old ones probably contenting ourselves with calling

up events of the past or present time, whilst those of the younger were as probably striving to penetrate into the yet unknown future; but we were all disturbed from our cogitations by a sudden ring at the door, which, as it was now late in the evening, was an unusual occurrence.

But we were not kept long in suspense, for the summons was quickly answered, we heard a smothered exclamation of surprise, and then, to the astonishment and consternation of at least one of the party, the unexpected, unlooked for visitor proved to be no other than Walter Annesley.

His tale was soon told: he had most unexpectedly obtained leave of absence from his regiment in order to take command of some detachments that were returning to England. This had all been decided so suddenly that he had had no time to inform them of his intended visit, until after his arrival in England, when he determined not to do so at all, but surprise and delight them by his sudden appearance amongst them, when they were supposing him to

be far away. Walter and Isabella were evidently much embarrassed at their meeting at his home, where the smallness of the party, which, with the exception of ourselves consisted only of relatives, made all avoidance of each other impossible.

But in a short time both had made an effort to overcome any appearance of constraint, and to the eye of any one who was not acquainted with former circumstances they had succeeded extremely well, and we were all reseated round the fire, the wanderer listening to home news, and amusing us with anecdotes of his adventures and various scenes he had passed through during his absence.

Sometimes in the midst of his conversation, and when he could do so unobserved, I saw him employed in watching my niece, and trying, as I thought, to read if her face told if she were pleased at the addition to our party, or the contrary. But the experience of years, in which she had learned the necessity of doing so, had given Isabella a much greater command of her coun-

tenance than had been natural to her; and now as she sat rather in the background seemingly intent upon her work, a deeper flush upon her cheek than usual was the only perceptible sign that anything unusual had taken place, and even I, who knew her so well, could not determine whether she was glad or sorry. Secretly in my own heart, I could not help hoping that all might now be well, and that two people so amiable, and to all appearance so well fitted for each other, might think so too, and come to an understanding; but they were quite old enough to judge for themselves, and I determined that I would do nothing directly or indirectly to interfere in bringing this about.

Christmas day and the following week passed away, but nothing had happened to raise my hopes, or make me think old differences would be made up, though I could not help suspecting that both parties were attached to the other, and that the only difficulty lay in that other not being aware of it. Still I could not make up my

mind to meddle, remembering how my heart was set upon the match, and fearing that I might be thinking as I hoped, not as it really was. Sometimes I used to be delighted with seeing them apparently on so much more easy terms, and her smiling, happy face and his look of delight, when they were thus conversing together, assured me that I had read their secret truly. Then again, perhaps, the next time I saw them everything would be changed, her manner grave and distant, and his disappointed and perplexed.

Now, lest you, my good old ladies and gentlemen, who may perhaps honour me with reading my story, and have, in your groaning over the gout, rheumatism, deafness, and various other infirmities which distress you, entirely forgotten the foolish, stupid manner in which you behaved, before you were engaged to the fat, comfortable old partner now sitting beside you; lest, I say, that you should be tempted to throw my book from you in a rage, declaring it the most incomprehen-

ble piece of trash you have ever had the misfortune to read, I will try and explain why things would not go straight with Isabella and Walter.

Walter Annesley, though still most deeply attached to her he had remembered so faithfully and well, had still the pride natural to every man, which made him extremely averse to again pleading his cause (as he was ready and anxious to do) until he should have good reason to believe that he would not again be refused. Whilst Isabella, on the other hand, knowing in her secret heart, how changed her feelings were to Walter since their last meeting, had a woman's dread that anything in her conduct should let it appear, unless (as she feared would never be the case) she should again be so fortunate as to have it in her power to redeem the past. This it was, that made her manner so shy and distant, when they were thrown together alone, and he, jealously watching her every action, naturally read this as discouragement, and an intimation that she was

willing and anxious to be friends, but nothing more. Truly, lovers are most troublesome, irritating people to deal with, with their continual misunderstandings, and I verily believe that they would never have come to an explanation if some one fortunately less scrupulous than myself had not come forward to help them.

For the advantage of my readers, I shall now relate, what I only learned some time after the events I am writing about had taken place. Mary Annesley had, as I have before hinted, for some time had a strong conviction that if her brother were ever again to urge his suit, Isabella's answer would be very different to the one she gave him some years ago, and determined that if it was ever in her power, provided of course that Walter remained in the same mind, of which she, who had been his confidant, felt little doubt, that she would do her best to bring about an understanding so likely to promote the happiness of both.

Accordingly Mary observed as anxiously

as I did how affairs seemed to prosper with them, till at last, as she saw they were as far from any chance of the past being set right as ever, she knew that the time was come to see what her interference could do.

So one evening, after bidding us good night, instead of as usual proceeding to her apartment, she tripped after her brother, under the pretext of sitting with him whilst he smoked his cigar, and determined to find out his state of mind during that time. I will try and transcribe, as nearly as I can remember, the dialogue that then took place. Mary was anxious if possible not to begin the conversation herself, and she was well enough acquainted with his ways, to be sure he would not be long without opening his heart to her, who he knew would so truly sympathise with him, so she seated herself in a comfortable arm-chair, and for some time they were quite silent, except sundry short unconnected exclamations of impatience from Walter, as first he threw all his cigars

down on the floor, and then the one he selected would not light; but at last he seated himself on the other side of the fire, with his head leaning on his hands, and then began.

Walter. "I shall go up to London to-morrow, Mary, I cannot stand this any longer."

Mary. (Feigning surprise, though in fact it was the very thing she expected to hear.) "Why what in the world can you be wanting to leave us for, when you have been such a short time at home? and Mrs. Isabella Craven and her niece staying here, too."

Walter. "That is just the very reason why I mean to go; the fact is, Mary, I neither can nor will remain to be made as miserable as I am now, liking her so! I have never seen any one to compare to her in my opinion, and clearly she cares nothing at all about me, and very likely thinks what a fool I am for my pains, and I am a fool I know! Here have I kept lingering day after day, and have some-

times flattered myself that she did care for me, and that everything would be right, and then I have found my mistake out. Only this evening I told her I wished I had never come away from Canada, and meant to return there directly, and she coolly told me 'that as I thought so, I had much better.'

Mary. "And quite right too; I wonder what else you expected her to say! Now, Walter, listen to reason. As firmly as I believe that you love Isabella Leigh, do I believe that she loves you, but whilst you will continue to be so unreasonable as to expect her to make love to you, you will never understand each other better than at present. Now do try and be more rational and just make allowance for her being a little shy and constrained in her manner to you at first, which, considering all that has passed, is nothing but natural, and a much better sign for you than if she were quite at her ease, which could only proceed from indifference. Remember it is not a pleasant thing for a woman to feel she has

changed her mind, and now cares for the man she once refused, and yet does not know if he has not forgotten her, and if you usually talk to her as you seem to have done to-night, no wonder she does not know what to make of you."

Walter. "But, Mary, if it really is as you say, which I dare scarcely hope, how was it that she ever refused me?"

Mary. "I can tell you that too, if you like to hear it."

So she then told the whole story, with which my readers are well acquainted, after which Walter's spirits were greatly raised, and he heartily thanked his pet sister, for her consolation and good advice, and she finally volunteered for his still further satisfaction, to do her best to discover how Isabella liked the idea of his departure, and he promised to be guided by her decision, whether to go or stay.

She accordingly took her leave, and soon tapped gently at Isabella's door, and on entering the room found that young lady seated in her arm-chair, occupied with

reflections which seemingly were anything but pleasant ones, as the tell-tale swollen appearance about her eyelids too plainly testified. Of this, Mary of course took no notice, but merely apologised for having intruded at so late an hour, giving as her reason for doing so, that her brother was thinking of starting for London the next morning early, and she thought, perhaps, she or her aunt might have some commissions for him there.

Isabella got up from her chair, and under pretence of setting one for her friend, managed to conceal her face for a few minutes, but when Mary again caught sight of it, she could perceive her lip was trembling, and that her voice, in spite of all her efforts to steady it, clearly faltered as she thanked her, and declined troubling Mr. Annesley with anything for her.

Mary's heart was touched at the sight of the grief Isabella so manfully tried to conceal, so she kissed her affectionately, declaring it was a very good thing she did not trust to Walter as a messenger, as she

said men are so whimsy, and I don't believe he has much thoughts of going after all. At this speech Isabella glanced suspiciously at Mary, half-fearing she had seen through her poor disguise of indifference, but Mary's face was so impenetrable, and she rattled on in such an unconcerned manner, that she was satisfied, and their good-nights were soon said.

Walter's door was opened for a moment, and a bright face peeped in, and uttered the magical word "Stay;" and then, in spite of all her brother's entreaties that she would remain, she flew off to her own apartment, and they did not meet till the next morning at breakfast.

Certainly Isabella's face wore a brighter smile when Walter appeared as usual, and I heard him telling her that he had given up the idea of going to town that day.

The young people, it was settled, as the weather was very favourable for the excursion, should, in the afternoon, ride over to Leigh Court, which Isabella had not seen

for a long time, and though it had never been a home to her, yet was possessed of great interest in her eyes, as it was the place where her mother had spent the happiest days of her almost cloudless life. There it was that Walter Annesley once more tried his fate, and, need I say it, prospered! I will only tell how that evening my consent was petitioned for to their engagement, and when I looked on the dear young faces of the suppliants, how thankfully I gave it, and my blessing too, to the marriage that had long been my greatest earthly wish to see take place.

XXXVIII.

It was a long time before Isabella and I left Sir Frederick Annesley's, for the lovers were so happy, and begged so earnestly that I would prolong my visit, that I was obliged to submit, and it was not till the

near approach of the wedding-day warned us that a journey to London for the purpose of procuring the trousseau must be no longer delayed; and as Walter's pressing business, which had so nearly deprived us of his company a short time before, and still remained mysteriously put off, seemed now likely to take place, I had little difficulty in persuading Isabella to start.

Trousseaux and engagements are both stupid things to describe; suffice it to say, that the first was like everybody else's, and as to the second, that my young people were not more sensible or more foolish than is usual, and that the course of true love had run already sufficiently crookedly for them to be very glad that for a change it should be smooth.

At my particular request, who think no married men have any business in the army, Walter Annesley consented to sell out, and I instantly set about making a deed of gift, by which, on their wedding-day, they should become the possessors of Homeden. For some time the young peo-

ple, with Sir Frederick Annesley, did everything in their power to oppose this arrangement, but I kept to my determination, and in the end conquered; and for fear any one may be tempted to use the same arguments they did, and term my conduct somewhat Quixotic, I will give them the same reasons I did them, and I think they will agree that I was right.

In the first place, I was an old woman, and never having been used to the management of a large estate in my youth, I knew little about it then, and now that age and many infirmities were coming upon me, I was still less capable of doing so, and the responsibility and anxiety it occasioned were very irksome to me. Then, how dull and comfortless would that large old house have been for one poor lonely woman; and I had the notion, and have kept it, that married people, let their station or circumstances be what they will, are far happier for having none but occasional intruders on the privacy of home, so I determined not to live with them as they proposed, but re-

serve an ample income for myself, and at once resign all landed property to the young people; and during the foreign tour they were to take immediately after the wedding, to amuse myself with superintending the building of a small but exceedingly comfortable house, at some little distance from the Hall, but still within the boundaries of the Park, and make that my future residence.

I had the satisfaction of receiving an extremely happy letter from my sister Rose; both she and her husband expressed themselves as much pleased with all they heard of Isabella's choice, and trusted that only a few more weeks would elapse before they were personally acquainted with him, as Charles had at length become unwillingly convinced that his age and precarious health rendered it impossible to continue any longer in public life, and had made up his mind to immediately resign his post, and return to England, which they hoped to do in time to be present at their daughter's marriage.

XXXIX.

THE reader must now imagine the short intervening time passed away, and on a beautiful March morning, when summer seems come all at once, the bells of Homen Church once more merrily ringing a bridal peal; children are bringing the few spring flowers they can collect for the occasion, and I once more, as in years gone by, am employed in arranging a snow-white wreath on the brow of a happy bride. At last the finishing touch had been given, and as I gazed admiringly on the sweet face and elegant form of my adopted child, I felt I need not try to make her look more beautiful than she did, and I prayed with a mother's fervency that my anticipations of happiness for her might not be misplaced.

But my reverie was at this moment broken through by a footstep sounding near the door, and, with one fond embrace, I parted from my niece, and committed her to her father's care, to conduct her to the

church. In a few more moments we were grouped around the bride and bridegroom, who were standing before the altar, and I, leaning on Sir Frederick Annesley's arm, listened to the solemn and impressive tones of the clergyman, who had just begun the service.

How my thoughts flew back to the time when instead of Isabella her mother stood before those altar rails a younger and as beauteous a bride, and I looked on with my eyes nearly blinded with bitter tears as my loved companion was taken away from me. This led me to think of the tender, gentle creature who had watched over our childish years, and as I looked at the beautiful marble representation of her, I could not help feeling as if she were really present, and blessing with that sweet smile the pair about to be united; and as these things were passing through my mind my eyes met Rose's, and I saw that she, too, had been engaged in calling up the past.

We were interrupted in these reflections by the sound of Isabella's and Walter's

voices, as slowly and distinctly they made their vows to each other, and then the beautiful blessing on the newly-married pair was pronounced.

Walter! Isabella! shall I be blamed if once again I confess to having been filled with recollections of the past? Of the time when it was the cherished hope of our young hearts that we might in this same old church be called upon to breathe those words—and now how changed is all from them! not that I any longer repine at the past; and in spite of this almost inevitable calling up of former times, this was a very happy day to me, and joyfully did I join in the congratulations of the party to the young people who were now preparing to leave the church.

I will pass over their departure, which I did not feel as severely as I expected, as my sister was going to stay a little time with me, whilst Leigh Court was made ready for its long-absent proprietors, and her presence filled up the blank in my home circle, and ere I was deprived of her

companionship Isabella and her husband were settled at the Hall.

XL.

AND now my story is well nigh finished, for I have no more stirring events to relate. I am the last of my generation. Rose, and her husband, and my brother Hugh have long since passed away, whilst I, who, it would seem, had least business left to do, am still hale and hearty. I have resided in my pleasant little house for some years, and have generally had the comfort of my adopted children, Walter and Isabella, living near me at the Hall; but during the recent Crimean war Walter, though unable to take any active part in the great struggle owing to having left the regular army, was still happy in being able to serve with his militia in the Mediterranean in the place of

the usual regiments that were then fighting in the East.

During the time Isabella was away with her husband I was intrusted with the care of a little fair haired, blue eyed child, their eldest born, and who, at my particular request, had been given the name of Rose, whom I fancy she resembles. Since her parents have once more returned to their home, my little darling has, of course, deserted me, but she has never forgotten her visit, and constantly finds her way there. This is the little one I mentioned in my opening chapter, and there are few days that her bright little face does not come to gladden the old woman's heart; then she will not be satisfied without tempting me out in the sunshine, and I follow slowly, until the merry sprite has beguiled me on until I am standing in the old Hall porch, and then I am always persuaded to come in and rest, and my own house sees little more of me that day.

On Sundays my little friend is always ready at the proper time to walk de-

murely at my side, carrying my Prayer-Book and Bible, and suiting her light bounding steps to the feeble ones of age. Yea, Rose, my sister, was the loved one of my early days, and Rose, her grandchild, is the comfort of my declining years!

And I have not only happiness in Isabella and her children, but constant and affectionate letters from Canada assure me of the wellbeing of the settlers, who now rank among the wealthy in their adopted country; and any lingering regret they might have felt for being banished from their native land has now quite passed away, and as their children grow up and form fresh ties around them, the old country is forgotten.

As I have said before, all of my own time have passed away; those that I knew in youth, nay, even more than that, is changed. I have witnessed the funeral of that mighty "Iron Duke," the hero of the Peninsula, and now he and his triumphs are spoken of no more, and the enemies of those days have fought as our trusted

friends and allies on other battle-fields. The world now speaks of the brave deeds shown forth at Inkermann, Balaclava, and the bloody scenes of India, yet still I at least fondly cherish the memory of him who fell at Waterloo! My drawing-room is full of tokens of the past; I am seated in my mother's arm-chair, and by my side hangs a faded miniature of a boy in uniform, whilst Rose's picture is the proudest ornament my small mansion can boast.

Think not by this, reader, that I am not otherwise than very happy; as the time comes nearer when I shall rejoin those I have loved so much, I become more and more contented with my lot, and willing to wait patiently my summons. Rose! Walter! Hugh! I feel it will not be long before we shall meet again!

THE END.

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